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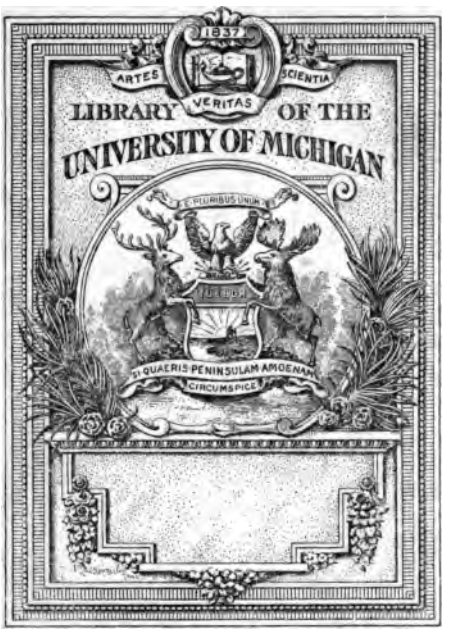
MONICA

& OTHER STORIES

PAUL BOURGET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MONICA

AND OTHER STORIES

BY PAUL BOURGET

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MONICA

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

PAUL BOURGET

TRANSLATED BY

WILLIAM MARCHANT

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I

MONICA

TO

MADAM EDITH WHARTON

MONICA

I

AN ARTIST'S HOME

EVERY one in Paris who has a fancy for the beautiful furniture of the eighteenth century knows, by name at least, Hippolyte Franquetot, the most skilful restorer of the fragile *chefs-d'œuvre* of the master cabinet-makers of a century and a half ago. By his wonderful comprehension of styles, by the elegance and precision of his work, by his ardour of enthusiasm also, Franquetot, though he has never abandoned his workingman's blouse, is a great artist in a very small domain. But are there any small domains in art? When one has studied closely these creations of a Boulle, a Cressent, an Oeben, a Beneman, can he deny a kind of genius to these men — really poets in their way — who, adding by turns brass and tinted shell and tin to ivory and to ebony, uniting in iridescent marquetry rare woods of distant lands, — arbor vitæ, violet wood, amaranth, kingwood, — carving and hollowing out rockwork, making contours of lace-work, giving to surfaces the curves as of a violin, setting on aslant the

shields and cartouches, have stamped upon these common things — an arm-chair, a sofa, a bed, a table — the image of an entire life, gay and opulent, pleasure-loving and aristocratic?

In the great shipwreck of the Revolution this art perished, like the rest. Where now shall we find the two hundred and forty master cabinet-makers mentioned in the *Almanack de Paris* for the year 1789, who had "done work memorable on one account or another," one of their historians tells us? The tradition of them is kept up only by isolated successors, such as Franquetot, in whom a natural gift and a prolonged study of the old examples have awakened a feeling for that cabinet-maker's work which is as delicate as the making of jewelry. They are almost always self-taught, except for having attended, while very young, courses of professional design. The necessity of earning a living has driven them into workshops, where their talent is exploited by their employers until, sometimes a small inheritance, or sometimes a marriage dowry, or more rarely a spirit of enterprise, leads them to set up for themselves. As a rule, they only vegetate, and many finally go back into the workshop, where they perpetuate, in spite of everything, the fame of that which was, before the sad degeneracy of a democratic age, the exquisite French taste. Those of them in whom artistic talent is coupled with a knack at selling second-hand goods — a case which does occur — invent a somewhat discreditable means of prospering:

they buy, here and there, worm-eaten fragments in which they detect a possibility of restoration, and presently sell, as authentic, arm-chairs that have been as skilfully reconstructed as the canines of an American heiress after a few visits, at twenty-five dollars an hour, to some Boston or Philadelphia dentist.

Precarious existences are these, lacking that vigorous security which the old corporations — of a time before the declaration of Human Rights — with their grades, their treasury, their laws, their oaths, their limited membership, procured for apprentices no less than for the brotherhood. These artist-workmen as a rule are conscious of this inferiority of the present to the past, and feel themselves victims — quite as much, if not more, than the nobles — of the revolutionary Utopia. And so, it is among them that the sophists of Socialism find their most determined foes. Their technical training, giving them the feeling of the well-made thing, saves these honest handlers of tools from the mental inexactitude which is so propitious to vain, empty phrases. Some, even, — and our good Franquetot is of the number, — from their own direct and simple experience arrive at the soundest political philosophy. Push open, some day, the door of the atelier which this worthy man occupies in the interior courtyard of an old building in the rue Oudinot, the windows looking out into an immense garden, which is still intact, and mention to him, in the course of conversation, the name of the artist whom

he admires most in all the world, the illustrious and unfortunate Henri Riesener, and you will be having very bad luck if the original personage before you does not burst out into one of those tirades in which he curses the Revolution with as much sharpness and lucidity as if, instead of being the son of a little upholsterer of Montparnasse, and himself a repairer of arm-chairs, in an out-of-the-way corner of the faubourg Saint-Germain, he were comte Joseph de Maistre, or the vicomte de Bonald, Monsieur Le Play, or Monsieur Taine.

"And they want me to be a Republican!" he exclaims. (By the way, no one has ever known who are these mysterious *they* hostile to the reactionary convictions of the honest cabinet-maker, who has never registered as a voter and scarcely ever talks with any but those of the same opinion with himself!) "I say to them, 'Have you ever been at Fontainebleau and seen *La Commode?*'" (To him there is but one, that of Riesener, an engraving of which you will find in all the special works on this subject.) "Have you ever been at the Louvre and seen *Le Bureau?*" (This means, as you will have divined, the no less famous "*Bureau du Roi.*") "You have never seen them? Well, go and see them! The man who made those exquisite things was prosperous. The king, the queen, all the court, knew his worth; they employed him, they respected him. — Then comes your Republic, and he can work no longer. Did you know this, he was

obliged to sell these masterpieces of his at auction, and he could not even get money enough for them to keep him in food in his old age? — My opinion, monsieur, is very simple: I am for the government under which Riesener could work! — Ah! that secretary in the Louvre, what a delight to look at it! What that man knew, and what we no longer know, is that each kind of wood has a soul, that it is a person, — that it gives a note in a concert, you might say. Amaranth, maple, box, violet wood, kingwood, male mahogany — he used them all, blended them together, and it is so lithe, it could run; so gay, it laughs; and it is so noble! How can *they* make us believe" (again his mysterious opponents!) "that men were not happy in a time when things like this were composed, things that delight your heart when you look at them — and they were made for use, too! Notice this, it is another of *their* lies to assert that these are all merely objects of luxury, and not serviceable! Not serviceable? With this simple and positive construction, these outlines so firmly based? What nonsense! It is the trash of to-day that cannot stand anything. And so much the better, too, so much the better! How could it be otherwise, when workmen are reading the papers and discussing taxes and elections and property, instead of thinking about their business? My men there, when I began with them, had an inclination that way. I used to say to them: 'Do as I do — when you have a

minute, instead of tiring yourself over that newspaper, which isn't worth the sou it costs, design a moulding, an arm of a sofa, the back of a chair! If you have a spare afternoon, go to the Louvre, or the Garde-Meuble, or Versailles. Don't talk politics; talk woods.' And I have trained pupils myself,—first those men, and then my nephew, Tavernier. Do not forget the name, monsieur; he will be famous some day. When he was eighteen I had hopes that he would be a Jacob. I have a marquise there that he made from a design by Grémont. What a man that was, the prince de Condé's *fournisseur!* But see, Tavernier deserted wood for marble. He went through the Beaux-Arts, and now he makes statues." (Then a sigh, that of a master whose favourite pupil has disappointed him, and a grimace of disdain.) "I didn't blame him for it. One should never blame an artist. One can never know whither *le bon Dieu* will lead him. But I said to him: 'You'll return to wood. Wood is life; stone is death.' And he does come, now and then, to help me out when I have some very fine piece to save. But they are getting scarce in France. We are letting them all go to America. And how will those Yankees be able to take care of them and keep them in repair! Alas! My poor, poor country!"

It is of France that this successor of the famous *ébénistes* of an earlier day speaks so discouragingly. —But time presses. He is overcrowded with orders.

In a fit of indignation against the bunglers of to-day, he has opened to you the very depths of his heart; and already he is forgetting you. He has settled his big round spectacles more firmly upon his nose. Although he is no more than just fifty-five years of age, his eyes are a little fatigued by over-fine work, as his hair and beard have whitened by reason of troubles. He has sought out, among the numerous tools that crowd his bench, the curved or concave gouge that his present work requires; he has tightened the double screw holding together the uprights of the cork- and leather-covered vise between which is held the fragment whereon he is now at work. He has forgotten you — you and France and America, and the "*they*" who have calumniated the strength of Riesener's furniture. He is now gone completely into his tool, which his agile fingers use with a fineness of touch worthy of the author of *La Commode* — with two capitals! His four journeymen, — very nearly as old as he is, — whom he calls, in a fatherly way, his pupils, and who are so, are also at work. The planes and the scrapers are busy, too, and no one is talking politics. Everywhere, to the right and the left, heaped up in corners, hanging from the ceiling, shapes of ancient pieces of furniture appear to view, with all the elegances of their curved outlines, the more easily recognizable because there is scarcely anything to them but the mere skeletons of sofas and chairs, destitute of all padding.

If the door in the corner over yonder should chance to be partly open, you will see another smaller atelier adjacent to the principal one, devoted to the repairing of tapestries. Three women are at work there, mending fragments of Beauvais or Gobelin. The needles move over the woof — here, completing the half-obliterated foliage of a tree; there, adding a finger to a mutilated hand; elsewhere, a feather to a bird's dilapidated wing. Once, not very long ago, before the events took place which are the subject of this story, that door was always wide open. At that time Franquetot would not have failed to introduce you into this more remote portion of his kingdom, that he might bring to your notice some stitch of *haute* or *basse lisse*, for, at that time, two out of the three workwomen employed upon this delicate reconstruction were very dear to his heart. One was his daughter Marguerite — so named because of Marguerite Van der Cruze, the widow of the great Oeben, who, for her second husband, married the immortal Riesener. And if Monica, the other, was not his daughter by blood, perhaps he loved her still more tenderly. She was his pupil, in the same degree as his nephew Tavernier, an enthusiast — like himself and trained by him — for the masterpieces of the Louvre and the Garde-Meuble. Now she has left him, like Tavernier, and in circumstances which have had some share, doubtless, in the premature whitening of the hair of her adoptive father. For Monica was more to

him than a pupil. Her presence there was, in itself, a living proof that with Franquetot, as with every true worshipper of art, the heart is as noble, as generous, as the head. Although that story is but indirectly connected with the little drama which I propose to relate, I must tell it here briefly, were it only to place in a clearer light the old man's picturesque and valiant physiognomy.

Some twenty-one years ago, then, one evening early in May, Franquetot — at that time young, and without a thread of silver in his bronze locks — was returning home at about eleven o'clock. Upon the wall of a garden which in those days formed the corner of the rue Oudinot and the rue de Monsieur — but has since given place, as all the gardens of old Paris are doing, one by one, to an enormous apartment-house — he perceived a large basket, which could not have been deposited there more than a few moments before, since the patrolmen on their rounds, who must have passed along that sidewalk, were still in view at the farther end of the street and had evidently seen nothing unusual. The wall was low and topped by an iron railing. The person, man or woman, who had watched till the police had passed and set the basket on the wall, could but just have had the time to secure it to the railing by a strong cord hastily tied. Franquetot cut this cord and took down the basket to see what was in it. By the gaslight he perceived that the basket itself was

lined with straw, upon which lay a new-born baby, wrapped in a blanket. A feeding-bottle filled with milk lay beside the little creature, and seemed to invite the passer-by who might find the child, to give it needful care.

Franquetot stood for a moment stupefied at the unexpectedness of the discovery and looked alternately at the baby's sleeping face and at the patrolmen, who just then were motionless, talking with each other at the end of the street. What should he do? Should he call them and at once rid himself of responsibility by placing the child in their care, or take it home and wait till daylight before making investigations? The latter course seemed preferable. The wood-carver saw distinctly in his mind the baby carried to the station, awakened, handled with brutal indifference. The thought of it made him shut down the lid very cautiously, not to waken the innocent little sleeper, take the basket up as carefully as a nurse would do, and go his way homeward with a very slow step, as if he were carrying the most precious of burdens.

It was thus that Monica — the baby was a girl — had made her entrance, on the 4th of May (the saint's day by whose name she was afterwards baptized), into the apartment at the end of the courtyard in the old house of the rue Oudinot. At that period a simple notice was upon the door: —

Menuiserie, ébénisterie
Hippolyte Franquetot, sculpteur.

The next morning, on waking up, the *sculpteur* aforesaid — whom this adventure had kept awake during a large part of the night — rose very early and went to look at the little girl by daylight where she lay, as he had left her, in her basket. Seeing her so pretty, in the yellow straw which went so well with the tender pink of her cheeks, he had said to Françoise, his wife: "Suppose we should keep her? She would be a playmate for Marguerite." They had already this one child, eighteen months old. Françoise had rejoined, "Why not?" And they had adopted the foundling, doing this in the simplest and quietest way, as worthy people in their class of life so often do their good deeds, seemingly unconscious of what they are doing.

The adoption of Monica had been the origin of the tapestry atelier. Having two young girls of nearly the same age in his house, the cabinet-maker had formed the idea of giving them an occupation which should be the complement of his own. Two lines more upon the sign tell the story — to his greater sadness now, when he looks at them — of this double fatherhood which, alas! was to end so unfortunately: —

Réparations de tapisseries
Gobelins, Beauvais, Aubussons, Points et Smyrne.

But Monica is no longer there to direct the work of the others, and pick up torn stitches with her fairy's needle; and for this reason Franquetot no longer likes

very well to have the door stand open. And this is the reason, too, for the sudden fits of silence which seize him in his most expansive moments. He will be talking to you with his picturesque eloquence of days long past, then will stop short, sit down again at his bench with an almost rough movement, and plunge savagely into his work. These sudden attacks of ill-humour are specially likely to happen if you, being an old customer, should ask innocently whether he has not some fine bit of tapestry to show you. "No, I have none," he will reply, with an impatience that you cannot account for, and very likely may yourself have increased — if you do not know the story of Monica's departure — by glancing toward the other room with a remembrance of the charming, girlish face that you used to see in all its radiant youth there among those ancient surroundings. Only a year ago the beautiful girl used to sit there, her fair hair knotted simply on the top of her somewhat long head. When she leaned too busily over her work, a tress of this beautiful hair would escape and fall over her eyes, and she would fasten it up again, with a motion that revealed the slender grace of her youthful figure. She had blue eyes of a soft, dark shade, which endless hours spent at her frame had not dulled, and features daintily pretty, which had a suggestive resemblance — due, perhaps, to the secret magnetism which emanates from things — to faces of that eighteenth century, so beloved by her benefactor.

Had not her life, thanks to him, been always passed among relics of that age? Her profile had the brilliant and tender, the changeful and gay refinement of heads drawn by the famous painter of *fêtes galantes*. At the same time, a modesty, very pathetic when one knew the sad mystery of her origin, seemed to check all merry mischief in the adopted girl, and, as it were, veil her with humility. Very white teeth, small ears, a slender waist, the feet and hands of a duchess, made her, in her cheap little frocks, cut and sewn by herself, a living Watteau. These signs of race authorized conjectures of all sorts as to the birth of this adorable creature. Was she the child of a drama of passion, having its secret end in this horrible abandonment, after having had for its actors the noble dwellers in some historic house of this aristocratic quarter? Certain it is that the girl, thus brought up by a humble cabinet-maker of the faubourg, had that instinctive, innate elegance which gives an air of distinction to the poorest attire, and in 1793 could make the high-bred woman remain the aristocrat still, even in the denudation and promiscuity of prisons. When she was at work in the atelier, seated beside Marguerite Franquetot, who had been her companion at every hour, at every minute of the day, in childhood and in girlhood, it sufficed merely to compare them one with the other, to recognize in Monica the indestructible prestige of race. They had grown up together, played, worked,

lived together; but while the foundling had, from her earliest years, the figure and look of a *demoiselle*, the other was plainly a working-girl, the child of working-people, having, in her entire personality, that kind of precocious and unrefining fatigue which shows heredity from too laborious parents.

To render perfectly intelligible the adventure to which these retrospective details serve as introduction, we must add that Marguerite, though Franquetot's own child, has never at all resembled her father. From her mother she inherits her big bones, her black hair, thick and coarse, and that soul, also, all animal and instinctive, capable alike of better and of worse, which by turns gives to her yellowish-brown eyes a courageous fire and the sly savagery of a wild beast. She still is there in the workshop, and you will see her bent over her frame, — her profile always sharper and more like an animal as time goes on, a profile in which a caricaturist would detect a resemblance to the weasel. How and why did it chance that Franquetot, who, though a man of the people, has not a trace of vulgarity, should have married the clownish creature who could bear him a daughter like this? Here, again, he showed the type of the unpractical man of genius who marries at random — anybody — to have some one who will spare him the intolerable vexation of material cares. *La maman*, as he now calls his wife, was a servant in a creamery when he first met her.

Her name was Françoise Cheminat, and on her coarse cheek there was a country freshness brought from the village of Puy-de-Dôme, whence she had come to Paris, impelled by that desire to emigrate which is one of the most inexplicable and most common traits of the Auvergnat. Franquetot had taken her for a servant, and a servant she had remained. Not a soup had she ever served to her man, in the thirty years of their married life, that she had not made with her own hands. Although, with his increasing reputation, the wood-carver now earns quite as much as the well-to-do families in the other apartments of the house have by way of income, the energetic Auvergnat woman has not yet, even since Monica's departure, been willing to entertain the idea of keeping a maid.

"Let me alone!" she says to her neighbours, when they urge her at least to have a cook, to spare her own fatigue. "Let me alone! *Pardi*, I shall engage one at the next Saint Never's day."

Or, sometimes this: "I will ask Darchis to send me one, the next time I see him." And to the astonished gossips, "You don't know Darchis?" And she quotes the proverb of her province:—

"Travailler chez Darchis,
Ni payés, ni nourris—"

Who was this Darchis, this legendary personage whom all the peasants in central France well know,

and whom they mention as the model of the *rogne-denier* (the "penny-clipper") that they would all like to be? This word, which savours of the *ancien régime*, and, like it, is not out of place among the curious old arm-chairs of the workshop, is one of those that Mother Franquetot retains from Fontfrède, her far-away village. — Yes, who was Darchis? — The good woman is no better informed on this point than yourself. She laughs, however, and winks, at the name of this imaginary miser as at that of a friend, and pares her potatoes for the evening meal more briskly than before, unless, perhaps, she may be employed in gently stewing a ragout after her own fashion; for, though she knows no more about furniture than about orthography, she has by instinct all the talents of a country *cordon bleu*. No person can equal her in the dainties of her native land, so expressively called "the Golden Soup," "the Thousand Millions," "the Farinade." It is not to her talent for cooking that she owes her marriage with Franquetot, for the good, easy man has never really known what he ate. But what of real life does he know, this waking dreamer, worthy to have made that very arm-chair in which the simple-minded hidalgo beloved of Cervantes, used to sit, hypnotizing himself over romances of chivalry? Before last spring had he ever suspected that his own home was the theatre of an emotional tragedy which would shortly burst out in painful episodes? Had he ever seen the savagely

hostile looks which his daughter Marguerite would fix upon Monica, her sister by adoption? Had it ever occurred to him that the foundling, treated by him like that daughter — better than that daughter, even — must have excited in the latter's mind an envy all the more passionate because there existed between them the antagonism of two races — the plebeian and the noble, and the hostility of two origins — that of the legitimate girl, the child of duty; that of the illegitimate, the child of love? Had he never noticed that his good Françoise — she, too — had begun to have sharp words for *the stranger*, whom she had welcomed with a cordiality so sincere when, long ago, he had brought the child home, a baby? Had he observed that special fits of ill-temper on his wife's part had corresponded to visits from Michel Tavernier? During these visits had he noticed the manner of this young fellow toward the two girls, and seen — what all his workmen had not failed to remark upon — the inclination of the young sculptor for Monica, her careful reserve toward him, and the jealousy of Marguerite? It is the honour and the misfortune of the devotee of art to pass through life without seeing anything of it except that portion of it which is in harmony with his dream. It was for naught that Franquetot lived in a poor courtyard of a poor street, and pursued a poor trade at a poor epoch — in thought he went and came among the splendours of a stately age. Reality, to him, was not our day of

tyrannical syndicates, and mean work ill paid; it was the time when Marie Antoinette visited Riesener in the Arsenal. It was a time yet more remote, when a Boulle, a Macé, a Stabre, those magicians in marquetry, were lodged in the Louvre, and described as *Sçavants Menuisiers*, just as a Descartes and a Pascal were described as *Sçavants Geomètres*. It was the famous period when Louis XIV. expended three million livres in works of cabinet-making for his palaces. Up to the time when this story begins, namely, the end of April, 1900, the calendar, to this honest and enthusiastic Franquetot, had presented only professional anniversaries, which he observed with rejoicing or with lamentations, as the case required: the last day of this month of April, for instance, was the anniversary of that fire, in 1720, which broke out about three in the morning, on the second floor of Boulle's house, and destroyed the workshops and the rooms where his woods were stored. — What an elegy upon these lost treasures! — The 6th of January was the saddest date of all, when Riesener died, poor and neglected, in 1806. — Again, what another elegy! — And so on with all the dates!

II

THE GONDOLA ARM-CHAIR

THAT memorable April day to which I have just referred had begun with an event which will be spoken of for years in the workshops of the faubourg Saint-Germain. One of the workmen, Jolibois, called the Admiral, — because of his taste for boating, — had been employed in stripping one of those gondola arm-chairs which were so very much the fashion at the close of the reign of Louis Quinze. The chair belonged to the estate of an old comtesse de Lingendes, who had died at the age of seventy-nine, leaving to her heirs one of those whimsical collections of furniture in which the choicest bibelots were side by side with the most grotesque objects, and the contrasting tastes of three or four generations were promiscuously represented. Young M. de Lingendes, the great-grandson of the dowager, had selected from among this mass a few pieces which could take their place in his wife's *petit salon*. The gondola arm-chair was among the number, with some other seats that matched it. It was a series of very fine pieces, but the arm-chair especially had that admirable curving amplitude of the back, that elegance in the fluting of

the legs and in the *motifs* of the ribbon, and that daintiness in the gilding, which are equivalent to a stamp, and reveals at once to the connoisseur a master's hand. Nor did it take Franquetot very long to discover in a corner of this beautiful piece of furniture a mark which he promptly identified as that of a certain Leleu, — an *ébéniste* whose works are now rare, — who, about 1772, had a shop in the rue Royale. The material with which this arm-chair and the other pieces were covered agreed well with this date. It was that tri-coloured damask, striped in red, blue, and white, which was made the fashion, about that time, by two of the *grandes dames* who were then all-powerful in Paris — the marquise de la Roche-Aymon and the comtesse de Crillon. This silk must have been exquisite in its light, gay freshness. At present, and especially in the arm-chair, which had traces of hard use, it was but a worn-out and mended rag. The lacquer of the back was almost entirely gone ; the beads and the indented edge of the ribbon were rubbed off ; a leg had been broken and then rudely glued on by one of those workmen whom the conscientious Franquetot spoke of, indignantly, and after the manner of the faubourg, as *badouillards*.

"The patient is very ill," he had declared, after being called in consultation by the heir of the deceased owner, and after examining the arm-chair with the eye of a surgeon at the bedside of a wounded man. Then he had added, as an Ollier might have done at the bedside of

a Trousseau, had he found himself there: "But this is a Leleu, and we must save it. I owe it to *him!*"

The treatment had been begun, in the usual way in such cases, by reducing the chair to a skeleton; and the workman employed in this preliminary task had suddenly discovered, in the hair of the cushion which he was picking apart, an object which had caused him to exclaim and all his companions to turn and look at him. This object was a linen envelope, very large and very flat, which the Admiral at once handed to the master of the shop. It was unsealed and contained thirty-seven papers of different sizes and colours, consisting chiefly of lottery bonds of the Crédit Foncier and of the city of Paris, and all payable to the bearer.

"Monsieur de Lingendes will be pleased when I tell him this!" Franquetot had said, as he turned over the papers. "What a number of five hundred and four hundred francs!" he added, looking at the figures. (Is it needful to say that this worshipper of Riesener had but the vaguest ideas as to the purchase or sale of stocks? Were they "higher" or "lower," it was all the same to him. Had he money to invest, he simply took it to a savings bank, which transformed it for him, in an almost mechanical way, into government securities.) And he continued, adding up the sums inscribed on the papers: "Let us see: two thousand, two thousand five hundred, four thousand, five thousand. There are eighteen thousand two hundred francs,

without counting the coupons that have not been cut off! On this bond, for ten years; on this, for two; on that, for nine! Probably the old comtesse had bought these, one by one, at a broker's. And then she hid them in this arm-chair! Why should she have done it? Well! that is her affair, not mine. What we have to do now is to pick the others to pieces as soon as possible! But carefully, boys! How many other pieces are there in the set? Four chairs, a *bergère*, and a sofa. Go to work! What a windfall for the owner! And he deserves it. He knew the worth of these Leleux!"

Whereupon every man in the shop was set at work taking off the damask covers of the six pieces that completed the set, of which the gondola arm-chair was the most important. Although surprises of this kind are not rare in the trade to which Franquetot belongs — so many are the jealous old people who consider mattresses and cushions as good hiding-places — this search for treasure always sets a whole shop eagerly at work. And so all of them, the girls as well as the men, — for Marguerite and Monica had been called in, — acquitted themselves of their task with a fidelity that left not a thread of the material and not a recess in the wood unexplored in all that had been the dowager's property. But this second examination brought no discovery.

"There may be other bonds in the furniture left in

the house," Franquetot said. "Here, there is nothing more." He looked at the clock. "It is half-past ten; we have wasted an hour. We must make that up. This afternoon I will go and tell M. de Lingendes about this. You'll get a good reward, Admiral. You must give us champagne! Now we must tie up the package."

"Champagne, I think not!" rejoined Jolibois. "But you must admit it is vexatious always to be finding things, and always in other people's furniture! You remember, *patron*, I found a will in this way, six years ago, and ten years ago, two thousand-franc notes."

"You could not eat more than one dinner a day, could you, if you had all that money?" one of the men asked jokingly; and this cheerful philosophy showed what a spirit of gay acceptance of things as they are the noble nature of the wood-carver diffused around him. His men and himself were one family. He gave a fresh proof of this in placing the precious envelope in the drawer of a secretary where he kept his own papers, and from which he did not remove the key. All the virtues with simple people have an easy-going air which gives them a certain strong, true poetry. They seem more frank, and deeper also, in being less results of attainment. But especially it is integrity which, in humble environments like this of which we speak, assumes that character of an almost august simplicity, so much innate and indestructible

uprightness does it take for granted. The worthy Jolibois, who earned exactly his nine francs day by day, never for an instant had the idea of concealing, from his master and his fellow-workmen, his discovery. And neither had they thought of being surprised at their comrade's honesty. Franquetot had not the slightest idea that this package of bonds could be in any danger in this drawer, which was open to all; and work began anew in the atelier, varied now by anecdotes about secret drawers in furniture which the master cabinet-maker loved to relate. Uneducated though he was, Franquetot had so ransacked books on the eighteenth century, in his eager curiosity to know everything about the makers of these beautiful objects which he admired, that he had become as erudite on this subject as a curator of the Louvre or the Carnavalet.

"No one made so many of them," he said, "as Roentgen, whom the English call David de Lunéville. But why, I ask you, unless for the pleasure of differing from us? For he was a native of Neuwied near Coblentz. His marquetry is not bad, but it is cold! He was very fond of Chinese themes. I had a *bonheur-du-jour* of his which was really curious. At the right there was a mandarin, who was taking a cup of tea. If you turned the cup, like this," and he indicated the motion, "it fell over. And there was a button which, in turn, opened the panel. The joint was so well made that Madame de Candale, to whom the little table belonged,

had never even suspected the drawer. We discovered it here. But the Admiral not being present with his luck, there was nothing in it of course! But I say this to you: these pieces of furniture with secret drawers do not belong to cabinet-making, they belong to clock-making. Roentgen had worked much with Kintzing, and he acquired this taste from him. He ruined himself with these fooleries. His Louis Seize *is* Louis Seize, I don't deny; but it is poor; it is bare, meagre, narrow. Nobody can do two things well at once. Are you a cabinet-maker, yes or no? Or are you a locksmith? You must choose."

The ardent enthusiast was just presenting this alternative to the pseudo David de Lunéville, as if the latter had been present, in flesh and bone, standing there among the chips for the purpose of submitting to him a design for an *armoire à surprises*, when the clocks of the neighbouring convents began to tell off the twelve strokes of noon above this peaceful quarter where their sound has the long-drawn resonance of country bell-ringing.

This was the moment when the workmen daily quitted the shop to repair, each to his own home, for the mid-day meal. Their way of living was as patriarchal as their master's, all four of them being married; one, the Admiral, to a woman who sold newspapers and writing-paper for the use of schools, in the rue Rousselet, very near the Brothers' School; the second, to a laundress,

at the extremity of the rue Vanneau; the third, to the concierge of a small building in the rue Pierre-Leroux; the fourth, to an embroidress, who had a room in the rue de Babylone.

The extraordinary occurrence that they had to relate made them more prompt than usual in leaving the atelier. It is needless to add that, the same evening, in all the rooms and small apartments of the quarter, nothing was talked of but this treasure of more than a hundred thousand francs in gold, discovered at Monsieur Franquetot's (public respect gave him the distinction of the "Monsieur") in the seat of an arm-chair. Such was the absolute confidence of Franquetot, not merely in his own workmen, but in all the inmates of the house, that he never thought either of taking out the key of the drawer where he had placed the securities, or of bolting the door of the workshop while he should be himself at breakfast in the apartment that he occupied upstairs. At the stroke of two the workmen returned, as usual; and when, after having given out their work for the afternoon, the master said, "I have to go to see a duchesse sofa in the rue de Richelieu, and then I will go to M. de Lingendes and return these bonds," he took out the package without any thought of verifying its contents.

"Perhaps I have your fortune here, Admiral," he said, striking the package with the palm of his hand. "Why not? Suppose the comte gives you, as a reward,

one of these lottery bonds. It may draw a prize; that prize may be a hundred, may be two hundred thousand francs! Such a thing has been heard of."

Everybody knows how childish is the imagination of the masses, how inclined to chimeras, idyllic or formidable, as the case may be. The visitor who had heard the finder of treasures and his comrades interchange ideas, as soon as the *patron* had gone out, would have again admired the facility with which the disinherited of Destiny seize the least pretext to build castles in the air. Be it said in passing, it is the disgrace of evil-doers in Parliament and in public meetings that they exploit, to the profit of their political fortune, this simple-minded proclivity of the ignorant to expect a millennium. At the mere hypothesis of an enormous prize gained by one of them, the imagination of all was awakened, and they began to dream aloud, each one giving in brief the story of the life he should like to live if the miraculous manna of a sum like this should fall upon him out of heaven. The Admiral took a house at Asnières, on the bank of the Seine, and passed his life there, managing a boat, built after his own design. Avron, the husband of the laundress, bought a vineyard in Nièvre, his own village. The third, Chassaing, the husband of the concierge, simply went to live in the environs of Paris, and cultivated a little garden. The fourth, Espitalier, the husband of the embroidress, removed to Poitou, near the residence

of his wife's family, and occupied himself in rearing horses.

In these innocent plans appeared the deep, vague love, common to the lower class of townspeople, whether tradesmen or artisans, for a country Utopia, which presents itself to their minds as one prolonged holiday, and in imagination they breathe its vivifying odours amid the close atmosphere in which their humble condition imprisons them. And it was enough to make the faces of these four poor fellows quite radiant, and to make their tools move gayly, until the unexpected return of Franquetot, and the still more unexpected aspect of his countenance as he entered, interrupted them. He had gone out with joy in his eyes and on his face — that of a good fellow who carries to another man a welcome surprise. He had said that he was going across the river, — quite a distance then, — and he was here again in twenty minutes, his high forehead all wrinkled with vexation above his great bushy eyebrows, a sombre look in his blue eyes, usually so clear, a droop at the corners of his mouth, a few minutes ago so expressive of simple good humour.

This disconcerting expression on this broad, large-featured face, where each could read, usually, as in an open book, struck his men still more forcibly when Franquetot, as soon as he had shut the door, and without his customary jovial "*Bon jour!*" had gone straight to the secretary where, in the morning, he had placed

the package. He had opened the drawer and rummaged, hastily and eagerly, among the papers heaped up in it. Not finding what he sought, he seemed to hesitate a moment, as if he were a prey to unendurable distress. In the presence of this strange disturbance the workmen were all silent. Amazement had paralyzed their wonted familiarity. This amazement still further increased when they saw Franquetot look wildly at them, one after the other, and heard him talking to himself: "No. It is not possible. I have no right to think of such a thing!"

He looked at them again; and passed his hand over his forehead several times, as if to brush away an idea, which gradually got the better of him, however, for, with a determined gesture, his face suddenly contracted in a resolute and almost harsh tension of all its features, he called them by name, one after another, with a kind of solemnity in his tone: "Jolibois! Avron! Chassaing! Espitalier!"

"Here we are, *patron*," replied Jolibois, speaking for his comrades. He was the dean of the atelier, and he expressed the common feeling of all as he added: "What is it, Monsieur Franquetot? If anybody is making you trouble, we will see to it!"

The four men had gathered around the old cabinet-maker. Their rude faces manifested such an affection for the excellent man, and such an absolute simplicity of heart in their devotion to him, that this scene, com-

monplace enough, of the investigation of a domestic theft amid the accessories belonging to a very humble trade, between these bloused journeymen and this master of the shop, in his awkward jacket no cleaner than their blouses, suddenly assumed a positive grandeur. The loyalty of man to man is never finer and more touching than from the workman to the master, the employee to the employer. It proves so much profound humanity in the master, who has been capable of respecting labour which is done for a price and utilizing without exploiting it, so much gratitude in the wage-earners, who have been capable of recognizing this fair treatment and not envying their superior for being more fortunate or more skilful than themselves. Franquetot was touched by the spontaneous impulse with which these honest fellows, seeing him so upset, but ignorant of the cause of his distress, responded to his appeal; and he said to them, their curiosity growing all the stronger from these first words of his, which were completely unintelligible to them: —

"No! It was not you, *mes enfants;* I know that; I see it. I was sure of it. It is not you." Then, with despair: "But who is it? Who is it?" Then going to the secretary again, and again opening the drawer, he went on: "You saw me this morning, when the Admiral found the package, put it in this drawer? You saw me count the bonds? You remember perfectly well that there were thirty-seven — exactly thirty-seven, neither

more nor less? I have not been dreaming, have I? No one came in before noon. At noon you went to breakfast, all of you; and no one of you came back until two o'clock?"

"None of us," replied Jolibois, continuing to speak for the others, who nodded assent to what he said.

"I have asked the concierge," Franquetot continued, "and he says that he did not see any stranger come in. Well, *mes enfants*, when I took the package to M. de Lingendes, and told him about your finding it, Jolibois, he and I counted the bonds together — and there were only thirty-two, instead of thirty-seven!"

"Only thirty-two?" the workmen exclaimed, with an amazement and consternation which Espitalier, the youngest, expressed in words, crying out, with his accent of southern France: —

"Where have the others gone, then? Some one has stolen them."

"Some one has stolen them," Franquetot repeated. "A theft has been committed here in my shop, in our shop," he insisted. "When Monsieur de Lingendes counted these cursed bonds and found only thirty-two, I should have been willing to drop dead on the spot. He was very good about it. I must say that. 'You made a mistake in counting them at first, that is all,' he said to me. 'No, monsieur le comte,' I replied to him, 'my men were there, they counted them with me. There were thirty-seven bonds.' He tried to make me feel

better: 'I was absolutely unaware of the existence of this money,' he said. 'If you had not told me, I should never have known that the five bonds were missing. Let us suppose that M. Jolibois' — I had mentioned you to him, Admiral — 'found only thirty-two, and we will call it thirty, to make a round sum — for here are two bonds, one for him, the other for his comrades. Take these, and consider it settled. Do not think any more about the five others.' 'Not think any more about them, monsieur le comte?' I said. 'But I am responsible for them. I shall make it good with my own money, if I do not succeed in discovering the thief.' And I shall keep my word. You will help me, *mes enfants*, will you not? I know that it is not any one of you, just as you know that it is not I. And to think if I had locked the drawer this could not have happened! It is my fault, then. And think of my having had pieces of furniture here that were worth five thousand, ten thousand francs! I have had a Boulle clock here. We have always left everything open, have we not? And we have never lost a pin! Ah! what a misfortune this is! But who is the thief? Who is it?"

"It must be some one who knew about the bonds being found," judiciously remarked Chassaing, the husband of the concierge of the rue Pierre-Leroux; and he added, with some embarrassment: "I told the story to my wife, I ought to tell you that, Monsieur Franquetot;

but I did not think it was any harm. She told all the people in the house. But I didn't say anything about the drawer."

"Nor I," said Avron, the husband of the laundress. "My wife was just going to carry home the linen when I came in. And I told her the story, too. But I didn't mention the place."

"Nor I," said Espitalier, "and besides, my wife has not seen anybody."

"For my part," said the Admiral, "I didn't open my mouth about it, and glad enough I am, *patron*, that I didn't!"

"You did well," replied Franquetot, who had listened to these successive confessions with unconcealed disapproval. "You meant no harm, my lads," he continued, turning to the others, "but, all the same, it is very likely that if you hadn't chattered, the papers would have all remained in their envelope. You didn't mention the drawer? But it sufficed that some one knew that the money was here, and came to search for it while we were all at breakfast; and as the drawer was unlocked — oh, you foolish gossips! The concierge declares that no one came in, but how does he know? They were all at breakfast, too, and were not looking. I forgive you on one condition," he added, "and that is that you swear to me to keep it absolutely secret about the theft. That is the only way that we can catch our thief. I shall notify the superintendent of police, and

he will notify all the money-changers of the quarter. Is it a promise?"

"We swear it," the three culprits exclaimed, with one voice, and the man from the South added: "We have been to blame, *patron*. But — I am sure the others will feel as I do — at any rate, take back the bond that M. le comte gave you for us."

"Espitalier is right," said Chassaing, "that will take off one from the five."

"It will take off two, with mine," Jolibois said.

"That is not fair," interrupted Avron, "since you didn't tell your woman about it."

"You will keep your bonds, you three, and also you, Jolibois," said Franquetot, much affected. "It is my business to ask your pardon if I spoke harshly to you just now — you are hearts of gold! You have done me so much good — ah, you have, indeed! But I am the master of the shop, and I am responsible for the money. All I had to do was to take the key out. Silence as to the theft, and also to know who they were that your wives have spoken to, that is all I ask. I will go this evening to see the superintendent. And now," he added, pulling off his jacket and putting on his long workman's blouse, "to work! for the honour of the Franquetot atelier and that Monsieur de Lingendes may have his things done this week!" Then, as his eye rested on the gondola arm-chair, he exclaimed, "What an idea, to use a Leleu for a strong-box!" And, for the first

and the last time in his life, there was in his voice all the wrath of a Jacobin insulting an aristocrat, and with clenched fist he flung at the shade of the defunct lady of Lingendes — who had hidden in the cushion of her arm-chair the tempter bonds — this malediction: "Old sorceress, *va!*"

III

SUSPICION

This need for secrecy in regard to the theft, in order to lull the anxiety of the culprit, appeared to Franquetot so important that he did not let his workmen go, as usual, on the stroke of six, without having once more, strongly and urgently, insisted upon their silence. Then, when he was alone, his first act was to go himself and relate to his wife the incredible event. It should be said, in excuse of this contradiction, that in consulting Françoise, he obeyed, not so much the need — which, after all, is but natural — of having a confidant, as that of asking advice. We have seen that at the first moment the idea had occurred to his mind of going to report his loss to the superintendent of police. Then, suddenly, this step had appeared to him fraught with too serious consequences. The police being notified, there would at once be a domiciliary visit to the atelier, and not only the workmen would be examined, but also the concierge, and even the neighbours. The whole quarter would know that a theft had been committed in the Franquetot atelier, and to the cabinet-maker the honour of his shop was his own personal

honour. We have seen how, at the mere thought that an object of value had not been safe with him, all his pride as the head of an establishment was wounded, and how deeply! It was natural, therefore, that even in his first dismay, he should have hesitated about taking a step whose compromising results he had instantly perceived; it was equally natural that this repugnance should increase upon reflection; and he now sought to have reasons given him, in support of his concealed wish, by her who had been his companion in sunshine and storm for nearly thirty years.

At breakfast he, too, had talked of nothing but the Admiral's lucky find in the cushion of the gondola armchair. Besides, had not the two girls, Marguerite and Monica, been themselves present at the discovery? By chance they had not been present — the door of the smaller atelier happening to be closed just then — at the conversation which followed Franquetot's return, after the second discovery, that of the theft; and so he was able to reconcile his own weakness and the strict injunctions he had given to his men, by urging upon his wife that she should not repeat this part of the story to "the children," as he called them — uniting the two in the same protecting word as he united them in a common affection: —

"I will be mute as a *carpiau*," said the Auvergnat woman, "although Gote is as wise as a little judge!" Madame Franquetot always called her daughter by this

abbreviation of Marguerite, and Monica she called *Monniau*, which means, in *patois*, "sparrow." The name of Saint Augustine's venerable mother, the grand Christian woman of the farewell at Ostia, was thus transformed into a sobriquet which, in earlier days, on the peasant woman's lips, had been a caress, and had now become an expression of contempt. *Monniau*, spoken gently, was the little shivering bird for whom the compassionate hand scatters crumbs on the window-sill; spoken roughly, it was the teasing little creature whose noise is so tiresome, and whom the woman of the house hastens to drive away.

"No, indeed; I should not think of telling it to the *Monniau*," she continued; "mademoiselle would imagine that we suspected her."

"Neither Gote nor Monica has anything to do with the subject," Franquetot replied. Although not very observing, his sensitiveness was too acute for him not to suspect, nevertheless, a strong hostility, on his wife's part, toward the adopted child; and every time he perceived a trace of this he at once turned the conversation. "We are talking about the superintendent of police. Would you advise me, or not, to notify him?"

"Notify the police?" cried Françoise, "and have the gendarmes come into the house and make us the talk of the whole quarter? I should not dare to go to the butcher's or the baker's afterward. No, my man, we will find the thief ourselves; Mother Franquetot will

make it her business; and if we don't succeed, we will give him his bonds from our little means — the heir! But no police in our house, I beg of you; no police!"

This entreaty of the sagacious countrywoman — to whom a legal investigation was the same object of terror, after so many years in Paris, but what a Paris! that it would have been if she were still living in Font-frède-en-Montagne — corresponded too well to the apprehensions of Franquetot for him not to yield to it. It was therefore agreed between the two that they would work unaided, in their respective ways, for the detection of the criminal. Franquetot would obtain, on the morrow, the names of the persons to whom the wives of his workmen had spoken; and Françoise, on her part, would try to ascertain, among the tradespeople, whether any of these women had been making unusual purchases. Franquetot would also go to the two money-changers of the neighbourhood and notify them. The first part of this programme was accomplished accurately, but without result, to the great despair of the honest cabinet-maker, to whom this theft, under his own roof, was physically as intolerable as it would have been to witness with his own eyes the destruction of some piece of furniture made by his beloved Riesener.

"If this keeps on," he said to his wife, when they were alone together in the evening, "I shall make no more ado about it; I shall buy the five bonds. The largest of the bonds were for five hundred francs. They

make a total of twenty-five hundred. What, then! It is the same as if somebody had not paid me a large bill; that is all. It has happened before, and it did not kill us! I would rather do that than to be all day long boring gimlet-holes in my brain! I can't handle my tools. I blunder and botch things. This must not last any longer."

Was it the prospect of the large sum of money to be disbursed that induced the greedy Auvergnate to break the promise she had made? Was she led into this indiscretion by the coaxing of her daughter Marguerite, who kept saying to her all day long, with that tone that calls out disclosures: "Is there anything that worries you, *maman*? You and papa seem so uneasy, as if you had been in some way unlucky."

A certain idea that she would not willingly accept — had it begun to rise vaguely in her mind from the moment the theft had been discovered, and was an insinuation enough to make her conscious of this idea, and no longer able to restrain herself? This, at least, is certain, that on the day succeeding this declaration which her husband made of his intention, the following conversation took place between her and her daughter, while the two were clearing the table, Franquetot having returned to the workshop to examine some furniture which had come in late in the morning, and Monica having gone out, under the pretext of buying some wool.

"Don't you notice she is always outdoors?" Marguerite had asked, adding, "especially in the last two days? It seems as if she were never still a moment."

"What makes you say that?" Madame Franquetot replied, fixing a look of keen inquiry upon her daughter.

"All sorts of little things. These last two nights it has seemed as if she didn't sleep at all. I could hear her walking, walking in her room. I think she would have been very glad to have found the bonds that were hidden in the arm-chair!"

"Did she ever speak to you about them?" the mother asked, with the same look, but more insistent than before.

"No," Marguerite said; "on the contrary, I spoke of them to her and she changed the subject. That is what made me think that the idea of their having been given back is unpleasant to her. She no doubt would have been pleased to have had them divided among us all. She wants money so much! She is so proud!"

"It is true, she has changed so much," replied the mother. "She used to be such a sweet child. Growing older has spoiled her. And your father and Michel, with their endless compliments, have done her a great deal of injury. I have said this to them, not once, but twenty times, 'You will make her proud.' And they have kept on praising her all the same. To mend holes in old rugs,— what a fine thing to do! And to go into ecstasies over old worm-eaten wood, — is that a

reason for putting on airs?" All injustice, in the small world as well as in the great, shows the same ingenuity. One thinks those changed toward whom one has one's self changed.

After a short silence, and with a sigh, which proved, after all, that her bitterness against Monica — caused really by the attentions her nephew, Tavernier, had lately been paying the young girl — had not entirely smothered the former affection, "*Tiens,*" she said, "let us say no more about her. That is the better way."

"Besides," Marguerite resumed, "I should not be surprised if she left us before long. She has an idea that she will have a fortune some day. She must have bought some lottery bonds with her money. Yesterday, when I went out after she did, about six o'clock, I saw her going into the money-changer's in the rue de Sèvres, probably to see if her number had drawn the prize."

"You saw her, yesterday, going into the money-changer's?" asked the mother, in a tone that appeared greatly to astonish Marguerite; for she replied, with the air of a person who was tempted to withdraw what she had just said, so much afraid she was of having done harm to another: —

"Why, yes, *maman;* but it was no harm in her. She may very likely have been saving money, as I have done. Papa is so generous to us. I don't know how, though, because she dresses so much."

"Listen, Gote," replied Madame Franquetot, and the shame of being false to her promise stifled her voice, while at the same time the suggestive character of what her daughter had just said compelled her to speak frankly to Marguerite; "can you keep a secret?" And as the girl nodded assent, the mother continued: "The thing you do not know," and she lowered her voice to a whisper, "is that a theft was committed in the atelier day before yesterday. Those bonds that Jolibois found —when your father counted them over with Monsieur de Lingendes, instead of thirty-seven, there were only thirty-two! Five were missing, and they must have been stolen from the drawer in the atelier, that day, between noon and two o'clock!"

"Then it was one of those bonds that she went to sell at the money-changer's yesterday!" Marguerite said, completing and giving open expression to the thought contained in her mother's words. Then, as if shocked at herself for having had such a supposition enter her mind: "No, *maman!* It's impossible. Monica has her faults. She is vain. She has too much self-confidence. She is sly. But she's an honest girl and wouldn't wrong a child out of a sou!" Then, hesitatingly: "And still, I remember she grew very red when she saw me coming along the sidewalk, and went very quickly into the shop. But no, if I had seen her take those bonds out of the drawer, I would not believe it."

"For my part," said Madame Franquetot, "I didn't see it, but I do believe it. Yes, it is she; it is she! For it must be somebody. It isn't you. It isn't I. It is not your father, nor any of his men — I would answer for them as I would for you or myself. They offered, of their own accord, to give up the reward that Monsieur de Lingendes had sent them by your father, so that we should have only three bonds to replace, of the five that were stolen. — For your father will replace these bonds if they are not found. I know him and I know myself, too. I would replace them with my own money, if he didn't. — The concierge swears that no one came into the house between noon and two o'clock. And you say that Monica, for two nights, has been restless and couldn't sleep? And turns the subject, when you speak about the bonds? And went yesterday to a money-changer's? And the one in the rue de Sèvres, notice, when there are two nearer; and went secretly? It is she, I tell you; it is she! A child that we picked up in the street, — it's the time to remember that, — that we fed by our labour, and brought up as our own daughter, and would never have told her that she was not our own, only that your aunt told it to you, and you to her, without knowing what you were doing, poor Gote! And trouble enough you had about it! But to-day is not the first time I have thought this; it is in the blood. Where did she come from? We never knew. To have left her in that basket, on that garden wall by night,

her mother must have been a fine tramp and her father a first-class vagabond — thieves both of them, perhaps. Ah! when she comes in, she will have to talk. I will drag her, with my own hands, to the money-changer's, if she doesn't confess. And I'm going to call your father."

"No, *maman*," Marguerite said, seizing Madame Franquetot by the arm; for the woman had made a gesture as if taking by the throat the adopted child. No sooner had her suspicions been aroused than she was at once convinced, so strong was the ferment of jealousy that had been insinuated into the peasant's veins by the daily evidence of the other girl's superiority over her own daughter. "No, *maman*," Marguerite repeated, "you have no right to insult her in that way. You have not enough proof."

"And what proof do you require, yourself?" answered the exasperated mother, in whom the little details related by her daughter — she had such a blind faith in her Gote! — had produced certainty. She had not observed the signs which ought to have aroused her distrust: the colour which had come into the girl's cheeks, the savage fire in her eyes, the skilful dealing out of her revelations. How could she doubt the sincerity of the defence Marguerite interposed? and she kissed her daughter, saying, "You have always been too good to her, and she —"

Madame Franquetot did not finish the exclamation, in which was implied all her bitterness on account of

the interest Michel Tavernier was showing in the perfidious Monica, to the detriment of his cousin, the generous Gote. But the latter would not give her time to continue.

"I am not good to her, I am just," she said. "If Monica has not taken the bonds, she does not deserve to be treated with severity. If she has taken them —"

"But how can we know unless we speak to her?" said the mother.

"She is too shrewd, if she has done this thing, to sell them all five at once," replied Marguerite. "She went to the money-changer's to get rid, first, of one; and another day she will take a second."

"That is so," Madame Franquetot agreed. "What a head you have! What good sense! The man that marries you will get a treasure. But where would she have hidden these papers? You heard her moving about in her room these last two nights, you said? They must be there!" And seeing that the clock on the kitchen mantelpiece marked at this moment quarter past one, she added: "We have a little time now before she comes in. Let us go and look!"

Monica's room, whither the two women hurriedly proceeded, to enter upon this secret and insulting search, protested, by its mere aspect, against an accusation so odious as that of a theft doubly criminal, inasmuch as it would have been committed by an adopted child under the very roof of her benefactor.

The house, which had been built by successive additions, like most of the structures of this old quarter, had curious inequalities of level in the same story. Thus, there were two steps of ascent by which one reached this room, isolated in a kind of turret added to the main body of the house, and Marguerite's room was next door, but lower. Monica's was a spacious chamber, ending with an arched window toward the garden. Her refined taste had made this room almost elegant in its appearance, and everything in it spoke of Franquetot's teaching and the girl's grateful appreciation. She herself, with fragments of rugs sewed together so that the colours harmonized well, had adorned with two centre carpets the red-washed floor, whose visible portion now shone brightly in the sunshine. The cabinet-maker had given her a little, old, wooden bedstead, which, in her leisure time, she had painted, and some cane-seat chairs, whereon her agile fingers had fastened, with ribbons, cushions covered with an old-fashioned flowered chintz, matching the window curtains. The pretty wall-paper was an imitation of cretonne. The blue and white tonality of all this was softened by the mild light of the spring afternoon. Although a multitude of engravings decorated the walls, not a nail had been driven. The scrupulous girl had with her own hands fastened a strip of wood along the top of the wall, the strip being also painted, and from it hung the braided cord that held the framed pictures. These engravings

had been presents from Franquetot, who had found them in some of the many journals of art that he had bought through love of his pursuit, and from the walls of the young girl's room they prolonged the conversations of the enthusiast with his pupil. Here was the representation of a piece of tapestry by François Boucher; next to it, the reproduction of a chest of drawers by Caffieri; beyond, there were decorative paintings by Le Prince and Bérain. The famous *Bureau du Roi* was not missing, of course. The room had a blended aspect of dainty nook and of schoolroom. It was at once graceful and professional, like the whole existence of the patient, industrious girl.

A crucifix above the bed, and with it a holy-water cup, in which there was a spray of box, told of the piety of the forsaken child; and a portrait of Franquetot, in red chalk, signed by Michel Tavernier, told of the two affections dear to this young heart,—her love for the subject and for the artist. The most scrupulous neatness was manifested by many tokens: in the appearance of the small objects ranged upon the table, which served at the modest toilet of the young inmate of this bright room, in the lustrous bindings of the few books on the two shelves of the *étagère*, in the abundance of little serge curtains that sheltered from dust the shelves on which lay the various articles of her meagre wardrobe. It was all very humble, very poor, but there was about it a certain air of aristocracy

which once more irritated, as it always had done, the rude peasant nature of Françoise Franquetot. For she called her daughter's attention to the appearance of the room, as they entered, saying to her, with a tone that betrayed almost a personal resentment: —

"Wouldn't one think it was the apartment of a princess?"

"We have only a few minutes," Marguerite replied; "you search the bureau, *maman*, while I look in the wardrobe."

With this, Madame Franquetot began opening the drawers, one after another, where Monica's linen lay carefully folded under bunches of lavender, while Marguerite opened two bandboxes that were on the shelf of the armoire. She then pretended to look on the floor, under the dresses, and under the bed; and finally returned to the wardrobe, saying: "You see, *maman*, we don't find anything; you were mistaken. I was sure you were." Then, striking the skirts as they hung from the pegs, she cried out, as if suddenly distracted: "This is queer! What is this? There is something thick, like papers"; and taking down the skirt, she held it out for Madame Franquetot to examine also. Taking it in their hands the two women perceived that there had been sewn into the lining an object which felt like a package of papers. To snatch scissors from the table and rip the cloth was matter of a few minutes only, and Marguerite drew out a

package wrapped in newspaper. Opening it, the bonds appeared.

"One, two, three, four — and a fifth one, which she took out to sell! Oh, the wretched girl!" cried the mother, "it is she who has stolen them!" And before her daughter could restrain her, she had rushed to the staircase, screaming for Franquetot.

"Coming!" replied a voice from the ground floor, and Franquetot opened the door of the atelier. "Is the house on fire, *la maman*, that you scream like that? I am busy. If you have anything to say to me, come down."

"The stolen bonds are found!" cried Marguerite, in turn.

"The bonds are found? Where? How?" Franquetot asked, springing up the stairs, four steps at a time, without having thought to put down the tool he had been using. The revelation made by his daughter had so overpowered him that he trembled from head to foot. He saw the two women standing just outside of Monica's door, which was open. He had not the time to repeat his question; solemnly, imperatively, Françoise had grasped his arm, and led him into the room, and now pointed to the open wardrobe, the ripped lining of the dress, the bonds.

"There is where we found them," she said, after this too eloquent pantomime. "Here, in the lining of this skirt, — Monica's skirt; and it was hanging in the back

of Monica's wardrobe. It was Monica who did it! There are only four here. She has sold one."

"Where is she?" said Franquetot, after a silence that was terrifying when one knew his natural openheartedness, and how quickly his slightest feelings expressed themselves, ordinarily, in face and gesture and action. He repeated, "Where is she?" and dropped into a chair as if stunned by the blow he had just received. That Monica, — the baby whom he had found in the street, the girl whom he had brought up with so much affection, had made a sharer in his own enthusiasm, had trained in his own knowledge, — that Monica had committed a theft, a theft which was to his detriment, was a thing so inconceivable, so monstrous, that he revolted against the evidence, and when his wife had replied: "How do we know where she is? She has gone to get her money, I suppose," he exclaimed: "No! I don't believe it! We must wait till she comes back. She will explain it all."

"You are like your daughter," the mother replied. "She would not believe it, either. But is this her room, tell me that? Is that her dress, I ask you? Did Gote see her, or did she not, going into the money-changer's in the rue de Sèvres yesterday, and going stealthily?"

"You saw that, Marguerite?" the father asked.

"Yes, father," said the girl, "yesterday, late in the afternoon."

"And she went stealthily?"

"She pretended not to see me," Marguerite answered; "but then, why should she have blushed up to the roots of her hair?"

"But when could she have taken these bonds, and why?" Franquetot asked.

"When?" said the mother, "why, while we were at breakfast. Don't you recollect she left before we had finished, just as she did to-day, saying she was going out for a walk? Ask her, herself, where she went. And why? My poor Hippolyte, you are always so blind! Look at this room, *mon ami.* Is this a working-girl's room, I ask you? And these fine clothes?" pointing, as she spoke, to the dresses in the wardrobe. "And all these folderols?" And again she pulled open a drawer. "Mademoiselle likes fine things, that is the whole story; and must have them of the best, as if she were a lady. It is not the first time I have had my eyes open, I can tell you. It is all her tricks to catch our poor silly Michel, the simpleton! She thought you would not count the bonds a second time, and she could sell them, one by one, and buy finery. Can you understand *now?*"

The furious creature had not finished her accusation, overflowing with long-accumulated maternal jealousy, when the sound of a door opened and shut below, and a step on the stairs stopped her suddenly. From various motives the three persons gathered in Monica's room felt themselves compelled to silence at her ap-

proach. She was coming, a little out of breath from running quickly upstairs, for she stopped for a minute on one of the steps; then she noticed her door half open, and with her musical voice called out, "Is that you, Gote?" and pushed the door wide, with a smile on her delicate lips, which changed into an expression of almost terrified surprise when she saw that her *parrain* and *marraine* — as she called her adoptive parents — were there in her own room, awaiting her, amid the disorder of opened drawers and wardrobe, and Marguerite standing by, and turning her eyes away, not able to meet the other's glance.

"Monica," Franquetot began, making a sign to his wife to shut the door, "what I have to say to you is extremely painful to me. You know that we have always treated you, Françoise and I, as if you were our own child, and that Marguerite loves you like a sister. In the name of that affection, I implore you to answer me frankly. Whatever you have done, I am ready to forgive you, if you will open your heart to me. Do not tell me a lie, my child; that is all I ask."

"I have never told you a lie, *parrain*," the young girl replied. The colour came into her cheeks as she listened to Franquetot. She had no thought of what an outrageous accusation had been made against her. But she had, it is true, upon her conscience the secret of her innocent romance with Franquetot's nephew Michel. During these last two days, and again just now, this

secret romance had been passing through decisive episodes. To tell the truth, she had been having many stolen interviews with the young sculptor in one of the streets that lie behind the apse of the church of Saint François-Xavier. At this moment she had just returned from one; and though, in the course of these interviews, in broad daylight, between half-past one and two o'clock, nothing indiscreet could happen between herself and the young man whom she now considered her *fiancé*, the mere fact that these meetings had been clandestine disturbed the lovely child. Evidently Franquetot had heard of it, and feared some misconduct. They had come to look in her room for some token of an intrigue, love-letters, perhaps,— while the truth was that if she had kept secret her engagement to Michel, it had been to spare Marguerite and Madame Franquetot, in a scrupulousness for which she was to pay dear, inasmuch as, at this moment, it led her to say the most unlucky of all possible things: —

"I will tell you all, but I should rather do it some other time."

"Do not listen to her, Hippolyte," Madame Franquetot interposed wrathfully. "She is caught! Let us get through with this at once."

"My child," said Franquetot, "when I went to the house of Monsieur de Lingendes, day before yesterday, to return to him the bonds that Jolibois had found in the Leleu arm-chair, we discovered that five of them

were missing. There had been no one in the atelier but the workmen, *la maman*, Marguerite, you, and myself. The guilty person, therefore, must be one of these eight."

"Ah, *parrain!*" cried the orphan. The cruel look of her adoptive mother which she encountered at this moment arrested upon her lips the indignant protestation she was about to make. She understood that she was more than suspected, more than accused. Again the colour rushed to her face. She was a foundling, harboured as a matter of charity. She knew this, and the shame of her situation was the deepest and most painful feeling in her soul. An impulse of wounded pride, not unnatural to an outcast, or to one regarded as such, mastered her; and, instead of defending herself, she said: "You suspect me. It is reasonable that you should. Well! since you have begun to search my things, will you go on?"

"We have searched," Madame Franquetot exclaimed, "and we have found."

"Yes, my child," Franquetot resumed, and this time his voice had that grieved astonishment of a man who has been expecting to meet with certain feelings in the person with whom he is talking, and has found others: "You are well aware that this dress belongs to you. It was hanging in the wardrobe, which is also yours. Four of the stolen bonds were sewn into the lining. There they are. Here is the place where they were

found. I do not accuse you. But this matter must be explained to me, both for your own sake and for mine."

As he spoke he held out to the accused girl the skirt which had been turned wrong side out. She took it with a hand that trembled with emotion. She looked at the kind of pocket cut open at one side, and still showing the stitches of the basting. The person who had done the work had indeed used a thread of silk of a kind which no one in the house but Monica possessed. But both silk and needle had been selected stronger than the work required; and this, on the other hand, was characteristic of Marguerite's needlework. Besides, no one but Marguerite knew the place where Monica kept her sewing materials. The evidence of the criminal plan that the envious girl had formed to ruin her at once came over the adopted child. She looked up, now deadly pale with the intense emotion this overwhelming discovery caused her. She looked at Marguerite, whose black eyes now savagely defied her; at Madame Franquetot, whose hatred, leading her astray, honestly, at least, it still grieved the young girl to perceive; at Franquetot, lastly, her benefactor, him to whom she owed everything. She opened her lips to speak, but her voice failed her. For a moment her features expressed all the anguish of a desperate conflict. Courage failed her to denounce to the father, to the man whom she knew to be so deeply, so simply devoted to his family, the infamy which she had just

detected. She laid the dress down on a chair at her side, and said: "It is my dress, and the silk is mine. All that I can say is, that I did not do that work, and I have never touched those bonds."

"Who, then, hid them in your skirt?" Franquetot asked. "And if you have never touched these papers, why did you go yesterday to the money-changer's in the rue de Sèvres?"

"I did go to the rue de Sèvres," Monica replied, "but not to the money-changer's."

"You lie. Gote saw you," said the mother.

"Yes, I saw you," Marguerite repeated.

"What can you say to this?" Franquetot went on. "Five bonds were taken away. We have found four, here in your room. The fifth is missing. You were seen to go into a money-changer's. You say, no. Let us go and see the man. It is the easiest way."

He rose as he spoke and turned to leave the room. Again the girl's face showed an interior struggle of extreme intensity. She also took a step toward the door, as if agreeing to be thus confronted, which would naturally have been her own demand after her denial. Then she stopped abruptly. The same idea which before had kept her silent as to the kind of stitches made in the skirt, again seized her: to go to the money-changer's would result either in the revelation of Marguerite's conduct, or perhaps the discovery for herself of a deeper and more ingenious contrivance to ruin her.

She remembered that the evening before, Marguerite, on some pretext, had borrowed, in going out, her hat and cape. It was evening, and what if the money-changer should remember the dress, and not the face!

"*Parrain,*" she said, "it is not worth while. I will not go."

"You will not go?" said Franquetot; and now he began to speak angrily. "And why not?"

"I cannot answer you," the girl said.

"But tell me this," he exclaimed furiously. "Are you innocent or guilty?"

"I am innocent," she said.

"Then prove it," he replied, with the same angry tone. "Explain to me how these papers got out of the drawer in the workshop for us to find them here. Explain what you were doing in the rue de Sèvres, and why you are not willing to be confronted with the money-changer. You must vindicate yourself, if you can, unhappy child!"

"I cannot," the young girl said.

"You cannot? But then, you must confess," replied Franquetot, grasping her wrist with an unconscious violence, so irritated he had become. "Confess, I tell you!"

"You will hurt me, *parrain,*" said the brave girl, simply; and the words were enough to bring him to his senses. Dropping the slender wrist that his strong fingers had almost bruised, he grasped his head with

his two hands, as if to repress the mad thoughts that he felt seething within him; and he did this so violently that the traces of his nails were imprinted above his heavy eyebrows. Then with a voice almost lifeless, such had been the violence of the passionate impulse which had just now shaken him, he resumed: —

"I give you an hour to decide what you will do, Monica. You will remain here, alone in your chamber and reflect carefully on what I have said to you. If, in an hour, you have not decided, either to confess or to vindicate yourself, you will go away. If you confess," he added, "even now, I will forgive you. I will buy a fifth bond, and neither Françoise, nor Marguerite, nor I, will ever speak of this to any one. You had a moment of insanity, that is all. If you do not confess, it is not insanity, but something else. I shall do nothing to harm you. I shall not require anything of you. I shall not give you up to the police. But you will never pass another night under my roof. And now, you must decide. And you," he said, addressing his wife and daughter, "understand that not a word of this is to be said to any living soul. I do not *ask* you this; I *order* it." And his face betrayed, as he spoke these last words, such a tumult of conquered anger that the two women were frightened, and left the room silently, followed by Franquetot, who closed the door without even looking at Monica.

IV

THE PROOF

THE sound of footsteps had long since died away on the stairs, and Monica was still standing on the spot where the fearful address of her adoptive father had left her. The dominant emotion of these first moments, in her mind, was a very peculiar kind of suffering, which was connected with her whole emotional history for many past years. To explain her silence in this recent scene, and her resolution in the periods that followed, the general outlines, at least, of this very simple, but very human story must be clearly sketched. She had been ruled by a single idea, constantly recurring in her mind, which had given character to all her thoughts, since the day when she had learned, by a so-called indiscretion of Marguerite's, that she was not the own child of Monsieur and Madame Franquetot. It was from that time that she had begun, by degrees, to form the habit of calling her adoptive parents *parrain* and *marraine*, instead of *papa* and *maman*, as heretofore. She had insisted upon knowing the circumstances of her adoption, and from that moment the wound in her heart began bleeding — that wound from which the illegiti-

mate child so often suffers, amid whatever favours destiny may have lavished upon him. No one thinks of his origin except himself, whose self-love is so on the alert, so ready to take offence at this point where everything causes pain. How, then, is it when the destiny is in itself so narrow, so humble, and the very bread that the child eats — the fatherless and motherless one, the child without legal rights — is the gift of charity? With proud and combative natures this feeling of a radical and indestructible difference between themselves and other children — a difference produced by the thing for which they are most irresponsible, their birth! — is transformed into an instinct of hatred and rebellion. They become anarchists or else criminals. With creatures like Monica, all gentleness and affection, a morbid delicacy is developed, a shuddering susceptibility, the constant apprehension of antipathy or contempt, an eager gratitude for the slightest kindness, a painful anxiety and reserve in the presence of hostile natures, a very keen desire for perfection that one may escape the slightest reproach. On this account Monica had sought to become what she now was — the most skilful workwoman at her trade; on this account she had lost no occasion to read and to learn; on this account it was that everything about her and upon her revealed that scrupulous care, that most minute watchfulness; on this account in the workshop atmosphere of her daily life she had had that reserve, those unvary-

ingly distant manners, that taciturnity, which made Marguerite believe that she was "sly," and incurred Madame Franquetot's displeasure, as being "haughty." The mother and daughter thus translated the discomfort that was inflicted upon them by the constant presence of a sensitiveness which to them was absolutely incomprehensible; for if, to the constant endeavour on her part to refine and improve herself more and more, there corresponded an ever increasing aversion on the part of Marguerite and her mother, it was, in fact, not to be wholly explained by envy. No doubt Madame Franquetot had instinctively grudged to Monica the praises which she continually heard of the young girl's grace and talent and character, from her inconsiderate husband, from his nephew Michel, and from the visitors to the atelier. Marguerite, in the same way, grudged to her adopted sister the preference that was always shown to the latter above herself; but with both, that which had envenomed this impression to the point of rendering Monica's presence physically insupportable to them was this feeling, as the years went on, of a character more and more incomprehensible. By a seeming contradiction, which, however, is easily explained on reflection, this incomprehensibleness which, it would seem, ought to produce only moral antipathies, is the commonest root of profound animal aversions. It is so because it renders the difference between individuals of adverse species more perceptible and, as it were, more concrete.

Monica had not only been to Madame Franquetot her daughter's rival, and a rival always preferred, and to Marguerite the same: she had been the creature of another race, the intruder, — *the stranger!*

Monica had felt the effects of this aversion of the two women long before she had been able to know its cause. The more she strove to be gentle, reserved, industrious, irreproachable, the more she felt herself hated. Then during the long hours of silence passed at her work, she had reflected, and had ended by attributing the unfriendliness of Madame Franquetot and her daughter to the stain upon her birth. Although she had not much time to read anything except works upon art, and scarcely ever attended the theatre, the few novels that had fallen into her hands, the few plays that she had seen, had sufficed to teach her how the world regards children born, like herself, outside of marriage ties. While she felt that her adoptive mother, and especially her sister, were very unjust, very cruel, not to love her, she could not escape a feeling of secret shame. It was true, after all, that she sat at the Franquetots' table, slept under the Franquetots' roof, through charity! She had no claim to be there! She felt, herself, that she was *the stranger!*

If the master of the house had not been the excellent man that he was, if he had not treated her with that kindness in which her poor heart, always maltreated elsewhere in the house, had revived, had been refreshed

and reinvigorated, how quickly she would have gone away from that hearth where her presence was odious, — she could detect it in every look, in every gesture, — where her virtues did her injury and her most ingenious efforts to please were repulsed! But the old cabinet-maker was always so kind, so fatherly toward her! How could she have the courage to leave him, and, especially, to tell him why? She was too well aware that this true and fervent artist, whose faithful disciple she was, lived in a dream; that he understood neither his wife nor his daughter, nor even herself, much as he loved her. She was aware, through an instinct of her delicate, womanly sensitiveness, that the day when Franquetot should see Françoise as she really was, in the sour hardness of her peasant nature, and, especially, Marguerite, in the base meanness of her envious character, would be to him a cruel awakening. She had long had, toward this man who had been to her at once the most generous of adoptive fathers and a father to her intellect, an educator of her eyes, her fingers, her mind, the feeling of an obligation of which she could never acquit herself except by bearing in silence the griefs of which she was the victim in that home, for his sake, so that he might continue to move freely in that atmosphere in which she delighted to have him live. For the influence which emanated from the old enthusiast had completely won the docile and fervent girl. She, too, *believed in* Boulle,

and Cressent, and Oeben, and Riesener! She had the little thrill of real veneration before certain objects in the Louvre and the Garde-Meuble, which Franquetot had explained to her with an enthusiasm which she had taken with all seriousness. She shared this enthusiasm and, most honestly, directed a part of it toward him whom she considered as the depositary of a tradition of art now almost lost. How could she have been willing to add anything to the harshness of a destiny which had permitted the successor of the magnificent *ébénistes* of the eighteenth century to be born in an age incapable of understanding and employing him?

These emotions, already so complex, were still further complicated since Monica had begun to be interested in Michel Tavernier, her benefactor's nephew. She had known Michel from childhood. She had played with him when she was a slip of a girl and he was but a little boy, without suspecting that this childish intimacy preluded one of those attachments which are all the stronger and more ardent because they have seized and captured us unawares. The idea of what he thought of her, now that she knew herself to be a foundling, had been so painful that this suffering had revealed to her that she loved him. From that time it was in vain that the proofs of Michel's reciprocal affection were multiplied about her; the conviction that he could not love her with the entire confidence, the absolute esteem,

that he would have felt for the legitimate offspring of respectable people, had never entirely left her. There is to a woman who loves such delight in giving to him whom she loves — in giving him herself — something he can be proud of; and it is so exceedingly sad if she must say to herself, on the contrary, that he cannot but blush for her! This was one of the two reasons which had made Monica hesitate so much on the brink of happiness. It had taken years for her to be willing to let Michel see how much she loved him, because of this very idea that she had scarcely the right to become his wife. The other reason had been one of those scruples of refinement which are known to very tender and very generous souls, who are incapable of returning hatred for hatred, and would feel themselves degraded in seeking revenge. Monica had had no difficulty in seeing that Madame Franquetot desired a marriage between Michel and Marguerite; she had become aware, with the sure instinct of a loving woman, that Marguerite, on her part, was in love with her cousin; and the more the mother and daughter were harsh toward her, the more repugnant it was to her to seem to triumph over them.

And then, the invincible and sweet attraction which drew the two young people toward each other had obliged her to receive the avowal of the love that she inspired and to avow that which she felt. But the secret motives of her long hesitation had not ceased disturbing her, even then; and for this reason her innocent engage-

ment to Michel had remained secret. She had continued to postpone the moment when Michel should come to ask her hand of Franquetot, her guardian. The poignant apprehension that later the young man might repent having married a foundling, the illegitimate and abandoned child of unknown parents, still caused terror to the romantic girl, at the moment when her life was to be forever united to that of him she loved. The reproach of ingratitude that she would incur that day from Madame Franquetot — from the unjust woman who, nevertheless, had brought her up, had even for so many years been kind to her, up to the time of this rivalry with Marguerite — disturbed her happiness, too, in advance; and withal, she had a kind of pity for her adopted sister, and a hope, in spite of so many daily stings, that a reconciliation between them would take place previously. There are hearts, and Monica's was one, for whom their joy is not a perfect joy if it cost a tear, even to their worst enemy. Why must it be that it is these very hearts which excite in savage ones the fiercest antipathies? The detestable act that Marguerite Franquetot had just ventured, in order to disgrace the companion of her childhood and youth in the mind of her father, and especially in that of her cousin, is but a small, a humble episode of the endless strife which goes on, in all times, in all stages of society, in all situations, between the representatives of those two lines of souls, symbolized, in the Book of all wisdom

and all truth, by the two elder sons of the first sinning woman: Cain and Abel. And let no one consider this legendary reminiscence too solemn for a tragedy played among poor people, on a very humble stage, and springing from a most commonplace incident! Are not all souls equal before the Judge, and equal, too, before passion and pain?

Is it now understood how it was that this child of twenty-one, matured already by so long an experience, and by so many bitter reflections, found in herself the strength of soul to bear, without being crazed by it, the sudden shock of the most cruel accusation that could be made against a young and innocent creature? Is it also understood why her first suspicion had gone straight to the true culprit, this Marguerite, by whom she knew herself detested? —Ah! but not to that degree, not to the machination of a villany so studied, so calculated! Is it understood, lastly, by what miracle of filial love, with the same affection for Franquetot as if she had been his own child, knowing about him all that she did know, having always feared that he would some day learn his daughter's true character, she had, at the moment for defending herself, felt that she had nothing to say? Would she have the strength now to maintain this attitude of heroic silence, adopted without reflection, upon the moment, in one of those spontaneous impulses of self-sacrifice of which we should never have believed ourselves capable, and in which are summed

up countless aspirations toward self-devotion remaining till then unconscious and ineffective? If, during the next few minutes after this interview, Franquetot had returned to the room where he had left his adopted child crushed under the weight of this horrible calumny, it is very probable that, amid her tears, the truth would have escaped Monica; for, as soon as she was alone, there followed in her an indignant reaction of her whole being against the ignominy of which she was the victim.

"And Marguerite heard it all!" she said to herself. "She saw me treated like that, and she had not a gleam of remorse for what she had done! For it was she that took those papers; she sewed them into the dress: I read it in her eyes. It was she who went to the money-changer in my name, without doubt, and wearing my hat and cape. She must have put on a thick veil, so that she would not be recognized. Oh! what an outrage! What an outrage! And only just now I was begging Michel again to wait awhile before our marriage should be announced, thinking it would give her pain and Madame Franquetot also! I was too considerate! I will not be so any more. I will defend myself. I will denounce her. I will show them how the pocket was sewn, and that she sews in that way. And I will account for my time. Yesterday, after breakfast, I was with Michel in the rue Masseran. I will tell this. I will compel her to go with me to the money-changer's.

If they do not recognize her face, I will make her speak, and I will speak. They will know our voices apart. I will tell Monsieur Franquetot what I have suffered for years. He will understand. He will believe me. *He* loves me! How very much he felt all this! How he will pity me when he knows all! For he shall know it. This is too unjust! What she has done is insupportable. I cannot bear this —" Then, beginning to sob, she moaned, "What have I done that they should hate me so?" And sinking into the very same chair where, half an hour before, Franquetot had sat, overcome with grief at hearing his wife accuse this dear child, the young girl hid her face in her hands and began crying, crying, shaken from head to foot with convulsive sobs, in which her overstrained nerves found relief.

A sound that came from the direction of the stairway recalled her suddenly to the reality of her situation. She believed that it was Franquetot returning; but it was only the workmen coming back. It was nearly two o'clock. The atelier came before her mind, as she had seen it every day for so many years, with its picturesque accumulation of old furniture, fragments of wood scattered in every direction, and the four men, Jolibois, Avron, Chassaing, Espitalier, working and talking under the superintendence of Franquetot. She saw them looking at the *patron*, observing in his face the indications of poignant unhappiness. They were seeking its cause. They recalled the recent theft.

They noticed her absence. They, also, would believe her guilty if she did not defend herself. Franquetot, it was certain, would say nothing to them; but Marguerite? And then, this very afternoon, some one would come — Michel, who, in parting from her not two hours ago, had promised her this visit. He had the excuse of an order for his uncle. To him that uncle would speak freely. Michel would know that she had been accused, and that she had offered no defence. Could she endure to be thus disgraced in his opinion? No. A thousand times, no. She rose from her chair and bathed her eyes to remove the traces of tears, then left her room, intending to call Franquetot and offer to go with him at once to the money-changer. Halfway down the stairs she stopped, and as she leaned against the baluster, a new succession of ideas began to pass through her mind.

"And after that?" she asked herself. "When he knows the truth, what will he do?" Another picture came before her: she saw the face of the benefactor to whom she owed everything, while she was denouncing his daughter to him. What grief would then awaken in those eyes! How that father's heart would be torn! The mother would be there, and would take Marguerite's part. What words would pass between this husband and wife, whom she had always seen so united!

"And after that?" again she asked herself. After that she saw herself resuming her place in the little atelier of tapestry, adjacent to the other. Her enemy

would be there no longer, after some fearful punishment of humiliation inflicted by this father, who had been so violent when there was but a suspicion as to the criminal. What would it be when he should have the certainty that the theft had been committed by Marguerite, and with what aim! The picture grew clearer, more definite. Monica again beheld the workmen, now suspecting this disgraceful story, their contempt for Marguerite, who had never been greatly beloved by them, and Franquetot among them, suffering from this contempt which he could not but see on their faces, — a contempt directed toward his own child!

The tender respect for this great generous heart's self-deceptions, which had always held back any complaint on the lips of the adopted child, once more took possession of her with sovereign power; and she went back again to her room, incapable — she felt it in every fibre of her being — of ever striking this blow at him who had picked her up, a very small, frail, miserable, abandoned thing, had saved her, had reared her, had protected her, had loved her. Ah! let her suffer, be slandered, misunderstood, persecuted — but let him never know it!

What was she to do, however? Amid the coming and going of these contradictory feelings time was moving onward. The clock from the neighbouring convent of the Benedictines, whose strong, clear tone Monica knew well, struck half-past two. In fifteen minutes

Franquetot would be there again, to question her as he said. It was then, and at the immediate prospect of this interview, where she must not speak, where she was not sure of strength to remain silent, that the young girl felt awaken within her that irresistible impulse of flight, that need of being elsewhere, of putting distance between herself and an insupportable situation — a physical outbreak of the instinct of self-preservation in the creature too feeble for resistance, as blind and overmastering as an animal instinct. Monica did not parley with this sudden madness; she did not say to herself that to go away thus, with an infamous accusation hanging over her, was almost equivalent to confession. No. With an eye keen as that of a savage seeking a trail, she glanced around the room. She perceived a little leather travelling-bag, and into it she threw the few things immediately needful, and also some letters, — those from Michel, — and some of the tools of her trade, needles and wools, and her savings-bank book. From a corner of the lower drawer of her bureau, which had chanced to escape Madame Franquetot's strict search, she took out a flat box, where she had been accustomed to keep the money that she liked to have in the house. It contained exactly a hundred and seventy-eight francs. She enclosed a hundred and fifty in an envelope, and left it on the table, plainly in sight, after writing on the outside: "To M. Franquetot, a hundred and fifty francs toward replacing the missing

bond; the other three hundred and fifty shall be sent to-day or to-morrow." She had selected this sum of five hundred francs because it was the highest that had been mentioned in the atelier at the time the bonds were discovered in the cushion of the arm-chair. This thing being done, she came out from her room, closing the door as carefully as an escaping criminal might do, and crept noiselessly downstairs.

The staircase ended in a passage, from which a door opened into the atelier. The window which gave light to the passage opened into the garden. This window was partly open. Monica opened it wide, and, very easily, jumped down into the garden, where, fortunately, at the moment, there was no one. She knew that it communicated with the courtyard of a large house in the rue de Babylone. She now began to run, keeping close to the wall, concealing herself behind a row of trees clipped as a shelter, where the early foliage was still too scattered to conceal her from sight if there had happened to be any one on the watch. But there was no one; and, reaching the end of the garden, the fugitive bravely opened the grated door, crossed the courtyard, and passed the room of the concierge without being observed.

She then hailed a passing cab, and was driven to the office of the savings bank in the rue Saint-Romain, where she knew she could obtain the money credited on her book. She then gave the cabman the address of

the gare Montparnasse, having planned that by dismissing the cab there, and going on foot, her travelling bag in her hand, to look for a room in one of the hotels in that neighbourhood, she would be taken, naturally, for a traveller who had just arrived by train. Her expectation was correct; and when she took possession of her room, in the sixth story of a lodging-house which she had selected as at once the cheapest and most decent, she could see from her window that the railway clock indicated only a few minutes after three. It had taken her but forty minutes to carry out this plan of escape.

Though very innocent and pure, Monica was not at all ignorant. Having lived in a Parisian faubourg and among working people, she knew what dangers threaten a young girl alone, when she is pretty and friendless and has her living to earn. In leaving the house in the rue Oudinot, as she had just done, she condemned herself to an existence which might be very hard if she did not at once marry Michel Tavernier. All her future now depended on what the young man would think of her. Under the effect of the kind of panic which had hurried her away from the place where Franquetot would expect to see her and talk with her again, she had entirely forgotten the visit to the atelier which Michel was about to make. He would learn in her absence, before he had seen her or heard a word from her, both the accusation that had been made against her and the fact that she had left the house. What if

he should believe this accusation? What if the proofs, so skilfully arranged by Marguerite's villany, should have an effect upon his mind? The poor girl, always haunted by the thought of her illegitimacy, felt her heart sink within her, and a cold sweat come out on her forehead at the thought. That Michel loved her she was very sure. And still, how many times had she asked herself whether there was not in the depths of his nature a secret undervaluing of her on this account! How she had dreaded the discovery some day of a trace of this unconscious contempt! Ah! if she were to meet it now, it would be only too well accounted for; but, also, in her present critical position, it would be too bitter.

Without any definite process of reasoning, Monica was conscious that this first interview with her lover would be a decisive test as to her future happiness or misery. If he did not doubt her, even in her absence and with so many seeming proofs against her, she would be sure that the cruel prejudice — the very thought of which made her suffer so acutely — did not exist in this generous heart. If he did doubt her, on the other hand, certainly she would not be angry with him for this mistrust, but how could she ever be willing to marry him? How could married life be happy, where the husband had not entire confidence in the wife? And this supreme, absolute confidence — did not her origin debar Monica from inspiring it? This was the

tragic and poignant question that the poor girl had often asked herself; and now fate had brought to her an opportunity to have it answered — and how unspeakably frightened she was!

In any case, there must now be no delay. Even if Michel should not be shaken by the accusation made to him, at least he would suffer from it. He would be very anxious about her. If he must doubt her, the brave child preferred to know it at once. Her first idea was to go in search of him at his studio, not very far from the gare Montparnasse, about halfway in the long and populous avenue du Maine — the point of departure for many a poor artist like this one, not far removed from the artisan. An instinctive modesty, however, prevented the young girl from doing this. She ventured, however, on a step from which she had hitherto drawn back: she wrote to her lover, asking him to meet her at eight, the same evening, in that quiet rue Masseran where they had often walked already, but by day. After she had written this note, in the form of a little blue despatch, in the nearest sub-station of the post-office, she still hesitated. In what mood of mind toward herself would Michel be when he read this single sentence, "Michel, I beg you to meet me this evening, at eight o'clock, in the usual place," and her signature? Would he receive this telegram before or after he had been at Franquetot's? Suppose he were out when the message came, and did not return in

season to meet her at the time designated? Suppose, believing her guilty of theft, he refused to come at her call? How long the afternoon seemed to Monica, as she struggled with these questions, and struggled too, with a very different kind of emotion, at the thought of going thus to meet her lover in the darkness and solitude of evening. She dispelled these anxieties as best she could by occupying herself with making the few purchases necessary to complete her provisional residence for a night in this hotel chamber, of which, besides, she was a little afraid. The landlady's look when she had given for name and address, simply, "Mademoiselle Monica of Versailles," had made her blush, and still more the further question, "Mademoiselle Monica what?" And she had replied, "Mademoiselle Marie Monica," thus making her second baptismal name serve as a patronymic. The woman of the house, used to travellers of all kinds, fortunately had not inquired further, nor had the clerk at the station when, after despatching the message to Michel Tavernier, the young girl had asked to send a post-office order for three hundred and fifty francs to "Monsieur Franquetot, sculptor in wood, rue Oudinot," and the clerk had asked, "From whom?" And again she had replied, "Mademoiselle Marie Monica of Versailles." He had looked at her, and so had the landlady, with a curiosity almost insulting. But what were these petty annoyances compared with the distress that she would suffer

if, when she met Michel, she should read in her lover's face that he doubted her?

When she arrived, at the moment designated by herself, at the corner of the rue de Sèvres, and could see, under the trees of the quiet rue Masseran, her *fiancé's* figure, her anguish was so great that she could scarcely go toward him. But he had seen her, also, and came forward rapidly. How cruel to Monica was that half-minute while he was coming; but what happiness, what a great wave of joy, flooded her poor, wounded heart when the young man was within two steps of her, and their eyes met in the half-darkness of the approaching night! Before he had said a word, the slandered girl knew already that he did not believe her guilty. The sculptor had one of those anxious faces not infrequent among artists of humble origin, where one detects the effort of a mind too much on a strain ever to expand freely, but with a certain pathetic energy in them that has its beauty. He was lean and not very tall, with a face pale from long hours of labour, and rendered still more colourless by the thick masses of very black hair under his soft felt hat. He was dressed, rather as an artisan than a student, in ready-made clothes, to which the suppleness of his movements gave a certain grace. His extremely white and regular teeth, the healthy red of his lips, the soft, silky beard, told of youth, just as the long, slender fingers revealed the clever adept, the skilful and adroit modeller. For Monica, brought up

as she had been to admire, to venerate the great masters of ornament of an earlier day, this face of Franquetot's nephew and favourite pupil was always radiant with the splendour of talent. Never had she looked at him with such a rapture of affection as under the spring leafage of the trees in the rue Masseran, in the late twilight, and heard him saying to her: —

"I have heard it all — I know what you have been accused of. I have been at the house. They wanted to show me a dress that belonged to you, and the stolen bonds, and the money that you sent back to them; and I said, 'I will not hear a word until after I have seen Monica; but this thing I am sure of, she is not guilty.' Ah, *mon amie*, how much you must have suffered!"

"Yes!" she said. "But how I am repaid for it all! It is almost too much happiness. It hurts me —" and, to save herself from falling, she was obliged to lean against her lover's shoulder and cling to it with both her hands; and in another second she had dropped her tired head upon them. The young man threw his arm around her to support her; her lovely, delicate face was very near his own, and their lips met for the first time in a kiss which was truly that of their marriage contract. For the first time there was nothing else but hope and confidence in Monica's soul. "You do not know the good that you have done me," she said, slipping modestly from his embrace, and taking his arm to

walk with him. "It was the test, do you see? Ah! now I am sure of you."

"You were not sure before?" he asked. "And what test are you speaking of?"

"Why, this," she replied, and in a voice Michel had never heard before, a whispered outpouring of all the long, secret suffering of her youth, she went on: "When a girl is like me, without knowing who her father and mother were, she is so afraid, always, you see. I have never said this to you before, but ever since I began to love you, and that was a long time ago, I have never been a day without thinking of it — without trembling at the thought that if ever in my life there should come a time when I needed to have you trust me, completely, without any proof, perhaps you would hesitate — on account of that. If you knew how many nights I have spent crying for not having a father and a mother, like other girls, and having them respectable people that I could resemble! When I ran away from the rue Oudinot this afternoon, I was only afraid of one thing, — that I should find you were suspicious of me. Ah! but how good you are, my love! How noble and generous!"

"I love you," he said, and, with his free hand, clasped the little feverish hand that rested on his arm; "I have loved you for a very long time — all my life, I think. See how wrong you were not to tell me all your thoughts. What made you afraid was just what made me most devoted to you. But you are growing too nervous now,"

he continued. "Try to calm yourself. You know we must prove your innocence and make it clear to everybody."

"No!" she exclaimed, standing still. "Never, never! Listen, I will explain, to you, everything; but I must have your promise, by all that you hold most sacred, by your affection for me —"

"A promise?" the young man exclaimed; then, feeling that she trembled violently, he added, "You know perfectly well that I will always do whatever you wish."

"I want you to swear to me," Monica said, and she repeated the words with great energy, "*to swear to me* never to repeat to any one, — do you understand me? — to any person whatever, what I am going to tell you."

"I swear it to you," Michel replied.

"Thank you," she said, clinging to him more closely, and, as if relieved of an immense burden by the young man's oath, she resumed walking, and now opened her heart to him fully. She told him all the other griefs concerning which she had been silent, as also concerning the most serious of all, both Marguerite's increasing hatred of her for some years, and the mother's partiality, and also the father's blindness to it all. She told him how she had striven to disarm this hostility — but unsuccessfully — by industry, and little kind attentions, and by humility, and her terror lest her kind benefactor should ever know the unjust treatment from

which she had suffered. She told him of her surprise on finding the father and mother and daughter all collected in her room, and then what followed, and the ingenuity of her rival's plan to ruin her, and her own reason for not defending herself at first, the mental conflict that followed, then her resolution to go away, and the details of her flight.

While she went on talking Michel could not restrain the expression, now of his indignation, now of his pity. When she had finished, it was he who stopped, to implore her: —

"You must let me off from my promise, Monica. My uncle must know all this. I am not willing to have him believe that my wife has been a thief. I cannot have it."

"You promised," she said, "and I will not let you off"; and as the young man made a gesture of protest, "You will keep your word, I know," she said gently. "On my part, I have faith in you. Now," she said, laying her little hand on his mouth, "let us not discuss these things any more. I need to be petted a little after this horrible day. But the end of it is so happy! Now you will walk back with me to my door. In the morning I shall go to look for work. I shall find it across the river, or on the *quai*, among the dealers in antiquities. I have three addresses. Then I shall take a room a little farther away, in the faubourg, back of your house, so that I shall not be likely to see any one

from the rue Oudinot. As soon as we decide, we will arrange about your going to your uncle's to remove my little things and to announce that we intend to be married. It is I, now, who want it to be as soon as possible. Ah! my love, I can almost bless Marguerite for what she did, for it was that which gave me the chance to know what I do know now!"

V

FRANÇOISE FRANQUETOT

As we have seen, the first impulse of Michel Tavernier was one of revolt against the oath of silence which he had made to Monica. It is so hard for a lover to know the girl he loves has been calumniated and not to speak in her defence when he believes her — when he knows her — to be innocent! After he had accompanied her to the door of her hotel that evening, and had parted from her with as much respect as if, instead of being two children of the common people, completely, absolutely free, they had been an engaged couple of a higher social grade, watched over by the strictest of parents, this revolt grew strong within him. Instead of turning to the left, toward his studio in the avenue du Maine, he had only to follow the boulevard Montparnasse as far as the church of Saint François-Xavier, and he would be opposite the rue Oudinot. It was ten o'clock, and at this hour Franquetot, under his lamp, would be striving to make out from an engraving the style of some piece of furniture relegated to a far-off foreign museum which he should never visit; or perhaps might be studying, in some special book, the life

and works of one of the little masters of another century. Michel was sure to find him at home, and not yet gone to bed. The temptation to enlighten him at once as to the incredible plot laid against Monica was so strong that the lover walked as far as his uncle's door. Arriving there he took the bell-handle in his hand. Then he hesitated about ringing. It was not so much the scruple of his promise that stood in the way, as it was an awakening of pity, like that which had restrained Monica. He, also, like the young girl, respected and cherished the deeply sensitive nature of the old cabinet-maker. He pitied him still more than she did, for he knew more of him, and their relations had been sadder, more trying than the girl suspected. It was, most of all, the memory of these relations that made the young man hesitate. Like Monica, he had always esteemed it a sovereign injustice of fate that the devotee of Riesener should hold no higher place than he did. Being himself also an artisan, just passing into the artist condition, he knew from his own experience how straitened was the man of genius, imperfectly educated, who has no companionship because no one is like him, at once too refined for his own class and not enough so for a higher class — whom time disappoints, since he must needs live, must earn his bread, must spend his strength and his days in paying tasks. He himself, better taught, better supplied than his uncle with technical instruction, thanks to his uncle, when would he

find leisure to work at that bas-relief in marble of which he dreamed so ardently, and of which he had not yet completed the model, a dying Saint Monica talking with her sons? One can see by what simple association of ideas the young pupil at the Brothers' School, and then the student at the Beaux-Arts, who knew no more Latin than theology, had chanced to conceive such a design. He had then sought for the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine at the Library Sainte-Geneviève; and though he was still unprepared to appreciate the sublime beauty of the interview at Ostia, he had had heart enough to feel the human nature in the aged mother's cry, recovering from her swoon: "She came to herself and saw my brother and me standing near her, and like one who seeks for something, she asked, 'Where was I?' And as we were silent, crushed with grief, she said to us, 'You will bury your mother here.'"

For three years the sketches for this work had been accumulating in Michel's portfolios, without his being able to devote himself to the work as he desired to do, on account of the petty remunerative orders that he had to fulfil. He was often sad on this account; and when he did work at the bas-relief he was even more sad to feel a constant disproportion between the antique theme fallen by chance into his unlettered mind and the powers of that mind. He had the realist's talent, a singular facility in fixing a likeness in clay; and, by an anomaly not uncommon among artists of humble origin, he did

not prize at its real value this gift, of a slightly coarse vitality. An abstract poet throbbed within the half-artisan. At least, he was young, and though he suffered because he could not "*faire du grand art,*" as he ingenuously expressed it, the hope of enfranchising himself was a solace. But Franquetot! He, too, had had an ideal, an ambition for this "*grand art,*" which to him consisted in creations that the sculptor regarded as inferior. But what of that, so long as the old cabinet-maker, for his part, regarded them as superior? Notwithstanding all the prejudices contracted at the Beaux-Arts, Michel had too keen a sense for beauty and elegance not to feel what there was truly rare and exquisite in his uncle's taste, and not to pity him for not having been able to follow it completely. Franquetot had in him perhaps the genius of a Boulle or a Caffieri. Perhaps he might have created a style, composed of pieces worthy of museums, had the conditions of his life been different. Instead of that, his existence had been spent in repairing, with admirable fidelity and intelligence, the furniture signed by others! The sadness of this fact Michel had long felt, as I have said; he had felt it as Monica did — more even than she had ever done. But this feeling was complicated with another, for the nephew of the sculptor in wood. Having inherited, at the age of eighteen, from his mother, a very small sum, which, however, gave him a little leeway, — six hundred francs annually, to be exact, — Michel had decided

to abandon *ébénisterie* for sculpture, and in doing this, had disappointed the hopes of his instructor. In giving up carving in wood to enter the school in the rue Bonaparte and devote himself to marble, he had taken away from Franquetot that which was to have been to the older man the compensation for his own disappointed life, — a pupil, namely, who, trained by himself, might execute the work of which he was himself incapable. The admirer of Riesener had cherished the dream of an old age in which, aided by Michel, his disciple, he should be able to compose the few pieces that he had in mind, and that he would sign with his name. The nephew and the uncle, to this end, would work in the atelier together. In deserting this post of assistant and heir, the young man had obeyed the most legitimate, the most natural of instincts, that which at a given moment makes the son separate from the father, the childhood's friend desert his early comrade, the pupil the master — when, of the two personalities, the one would stifle the other. Michel Tavernier had thus abandoned Franquetot because he felt himself perishing in these surroundings of industrial art. He had not freed himself without a certain remorse. The disappointment that he could read in his uncle's face, though it had never been expressed in words, had had its effect upon his conscience.

And now, as he was about to ring at the door in the rue Oudinot, all this little moral drama presented itself

anew before the mind of Monica's lover. Was he now, after having been to this sincere, humiliated artist the cause of an almost daily repeated pang, to be to him the cause, also, of an anguish so cruel, so lasting: that of a father, blind heretofore, and suddenly made aware that his daughter has committed the vilest of outrages — and this, when the victim of it herself begged for his silence, insisted upon it even, and when he had promised it to her with the most solemn attestation? And Michel's hand, which had been lifted to grasp the bell-handle, fell back without having pulled the bell. "Monica is right. Monica is right," he repeated to himself, as he went his way homeward, passing over the very spot where, twenty-one years before, almost at the same time in the year, his uncle had picked up the foundling asleep on the straw in her basket. "I could not tell him that."

This conviction had been so strong that the following day, when he again saw Monica, he did not try to persuade her to abandon a resolution which continued, however, to be extremely painful to him. During the whole of that day, which the two lovers spent in going about Paris, looking first for employment for Monica and then for a room for her, the young girl did not make a gesture or say a word without renewing in him the grief of knowing that such a creature was the victim of calumny. That which he found most touching of all was the deep tranquillity with which he saw that

she was filled. She was sad — he saw this in her look — at having been obliged thus to flee from the house of her adoptive father; sad, also, at having been so basely slandered by the companion of her childhood, and so rapidly judged and condemned by Madame Franquetot; and she was very sad at the grief which she knew that Franquetot himself was feeling. But the certainty that she was loved by Michel with absolute confidence gave her that calm of the strong attachment against which no menace prevails. To feel that by his affection and his presence, one gives this serenity to a woman's heart, is truly to feel one's self beloved by her. And then, the girl's innocence, her reserve so simple and modest in a situation so perilous, raised to its highest degree the passion of him who was to be the husband of this beautiful and maidenly creature, and his indignation against his cousin's outrage. For he had no doubt himself that Marguerite was the guilty person. Even if Monica's conviction had not suggested it to him, his own observations had too long made him aware of the legitimate daughter's hatred for the adopted one. It was toward this guilty Marguerite that the pledge of silence imposed by the calumniated girl would be most difficult to keep. Monica was so well aware of this that it was the subject of her special cautions to Michel when, two days after her flight from the rue Oudinot, she decided to send him thither. She had taken a furnished room in the rue de Vanves, very near

the avenue du Maine. From the beginning of the next week she would have a place in the repair workshop of one of the great dealers in antiquities of the quai Malaquais, where she would earn four francs a day and the noonday meal. These arrangements would last until their marriage.

"We ought to communicate with your uncle as soon as possible," she had said to Michel, "first of all to relieve his anxiety about me. In spite of all that they have made him believe, he loves me. And, then, I need to have all my little things. No one but you could get them for me. And then, you know, your uncle is my guardian, and if there should be difficulties, the sooner we encounter them the sooner we shall get done with them and the sooner we shall be married. But remember your promise. You will enter into no discussion as to that frightful thing. You will not speak, and you will not let yourself be spoken to, about it — not even by Marguerite."

"I will keep my word until you release me from it," Tavernier had said. But although he had been perfectly sincere in renewing his promise, he was greatly disturbed in mind when, about half-past one that day, he presented himself in his uncle's atelier. It was the moment when he felt most sure of finding Franquetot alone.

The old cabinet-maker was, in fact, in his workshop, employed in one of those little tasks which he took up

for his own amusement in the intervals of the work at which he and his men were employed together. He was cleaning a little chest in Vernis-martin.

If Michel had had any doubt as to the pain which the recent occurrence had caused the uncompromising old man, he would have found proof of it in the manner in which he was received. Robert Martin, the inventor of the method that bears his name, was, at the distance of a century and a half, one of Franquetot's personal enemies. In ordinary times he would not have failed to fulminate against the system of decoration inaugurated by this master, against these landscapes which are not framed by anything in the structure of the piece of furniture.

This particular morning, though he had, one may be permitted to say, literally the pretext in hand, he fired off no epigrams at the "*vernisseur du Roy*" praised by Voltaire, who sings of

Ces fiers lambris dorés et vernis par Martin!

He only said to his nephew, "*Tiens!* is that you, my boy?" which indicated no desire to enter into a conversation, æsthetic or otherwise.

"Yes, uncle, it is I," replied the young man, with a kind of seriousness which did not even make the other look up. His evident intention to avoid all further talk gave way, however, as Michel continued. "Yes, it is I," he repeated, "and I came to tell you some news. I

am going to be married;" and, as Franquetot still made no answer, he added, "I am going to marry Monica."

"You — are going to marry Monica?" said the *ébéniste*. His blue eyes flashed angrily under his bushy eyebrows, which contracted in a formidable frown. His fingers closed tight upon the bit of cloth with which he was polishing the little chest in Vernis-martin. But this was only for a moment, and vanished as soon as seen. "You marry for yourself, not me, my lad," he resumed, going on with his work. "Only you must understand that after what has happened, and from the moment that wretched girl left us as she did, she will never return here, and I shall never recognize her as a niece."

"Uncle," replied Michel, in his turn infuriated, "you have just said a thing, in speaking of my *fiancée*, that I cannot pass over. No! My wife will never set foot in this house, but it is because I will never permit her to do so."

"Then," queried the older man, with deep irony, and relinquishing his work, "she has proved to you that it was not she who took the missing bonds? In that case, will you explain to me why she did not prove her innocence here, when I questioned her; why did she escape from the house by the window instead of waiting to speak to me, if she had anything to say in her own defence; why did she make restitution of the five hundred francs of the fifth bond? If all this conduct is not

a confession, by what name do you call it? Speak; I will listen to you. But speak, I tell you!"

"I have no explanation to give you," the young man said. "All appearances are against Monica, I admit it; but I know that she is innocent, and the proof of this is that I am going to marry her."

"It is the proof that you are mad," replied Franquetot, with a violence that was now uncontrolled, "mad and ungrateful! Let me talk now," he went on, seeing that Michel was about to interrupt him, "let *me* talk, since *you* will not! You can't tell me what she said to you, because she said nothing. She wept. She swore to you that she was innocent, and you believed her because she is a pretty girl and you are in love with her, like the fool that you are! And you are going to marry her? As for the old uncle, you will never see him any more, — that is all, — ungrateful that you are! I have not had to wait till now to know this and to know that you have no affection for me. If you had loved me, would you have left me as you did? Would you not have remained here to help me? But no; an *ébéniste*, a cabinet-maker, is not fine enough for Monsieur Tavernier. To work in wood is to be an artisan. To work in marble is to be a gentleman. What does it matter if the poor uncle grows old all alone, and has no one to help him or to love him? But there are two simple hearts that are true to me — my wife and my daughter. They care nothing for Boulle and Oeben and Riesener — and every-

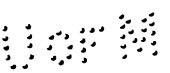
thing that you two pretended to enjoy, you and Monica! But they are faithful to me, and they will be my comfort."

The tone of grief with which Franquetot uttered this sort of imprecation completely upset Michel. It was frightfully cruel to hear his uncle express feelings toward him which he knew existed, but not in so manifest, so acute a form. At the same time, he had to recognize yet once again, how deeply Franquetot loved his wife and daughter, and, hence, how wise and charitable was Monica's decision as to her line of conduct. One could not touch that affection without tearing the most sensitive, the most vital fibres of his heart. The young man remained silent therefore, the prey of an emotion which he must not even show, since he was not willing to reply to his uncle's unjust reproaches. Would he have had the strength to hear more of this; would he not have yielded at last to the necessity of speaking for himself and for Monica? He was saved from this temptation by the arrival — for it was now just on the stroke of two — of one of the workmen, whose coming interrupted this painful interview. This was Jolibois, the Admiral, who had known Michel as a boy.

"I am not interrupting you, *patron?*" he asked; and as he knew too well the various expressions of Franquetot's face not to perceive that a violent discussion had been going on between the uncle and nephew, he at once

concluded that Monica's departure had been the subject of it. Since yesterday this departure had greatly occupied the atelier. Although Marguerite, fearing her father's anger, had not yet dared to spread her infamous calumny, and Franquetot himself had cut short the possibility of her doing it at any later time by relating openly in the workshop that the missing bonds had after all been found in the drawer of the secretary hidden in the folds of a newspaper, Espitalier, the man from the South, had connected the story of the securities lost and then found with the absence of Monica. He was a talkative fellow, common and familiar, whom Monica had always somewhat intimidated and, consequently, offended by her attitude of reserve. Jolibois had defended the adopted child. However, he also scented some mystery, and had not dared, any more than the others, to make any inquiry of the master of the shop.

To find him thus alone with Michel, and the two evidently in an angry discussion, corroborated suddenly a conjecture which he had formed. For a long time he had suspected the little love-drama which was going on among the three young people, Monica, Marguerite, and the sculptor. He also had noticed that Madame Franquetot was hotly opposed to a marriage between her nephew and Monica. He therefore believed that the stormy conversation between the two men which his sudden entrance brought to a stand had no other subject than this; and his delight at thus gaining a proof which



would permit him to show that Espitalier was in the wrong was so great that he could not help mingling in the conversation, by saying to Tavernier, "You seem to be rather discomposed to-day, my little Mike!" by which friendly name the young sculptor had been known when he was but an apprentice. "It is none of my business, and I don't know what the trouble is. But whatever it may be, keep on your track, my son, and it will come right. We have put this arm-chair in good order," and he pointed to one that had been finished the day before, "but it was brought in here rolled up in an apron; isn't that true, Franquetot? It's the image of life, my boy. Everything comes to pieces and is glued together again," he concluded philosophically.

"You see, uncle," said the young man, making no reply to the journeyman's pleasantry, and drawing Franquetot into a corner, not to be overheard, "that this man already has his suspicions. The others are just coming. We can talk no more at present. I will reply to all that you have said to me — and it is most unjust, that I swear to you — another day. Now, I have only time for the first of the two questions which I came to ask you: shall you refuse, as guardian, to authorize Monica's marriage to me?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"You will then oblige us to take the legal steps?" said the young man.

"You can take them," Franquetot replied. "For my

part, I shall have done my duty. What is your second question?" he continued; "and make haste about it. I must go to work."

"It is in regard to Monica's things," said the young man.

"You are to take them to her?" Franquetot asked. "That is no great matter! You can arrange about that with your aunt." And opening the door at the foot of the stairs, he pushed his nephew out of the atelier, calling out: "Françoise! Françoise!" and when his wife appeared, leaning over the balusters, he added, "Assist Michel about what he wants to do." Then, without saying good-by to the young sculptor, he returned into the workshop and shut the door abruptly.

"What can I do for you, my good Michel?" said Madame Franquetot, in a tone as friendly and courteous as her husband's reception had been arrogant: the tone of the mother who has a treasure of a girl to dispose of, and is speaking to a possible son-in-law! She who had been the maid in a creamery still wore the head-band, the short petticoats, the thick, hand-knit, yarn stockings, and the galoshes of the *brayaudes* of her own country. Her reddish brown complexion had not been cleansed of its sunburn by the many years she had lived in the city. We may add, furthermore, that, winter as well as summer, the hardy housewife lived, from *patron-minet* to *couvre-feu*, with all the windows wide open; and with the great neglected garden, into which her kitchen

looked, she could easily believe herself still in the country. Her wolf's eyes, small and brown, lighted up with all the fire of youth — despite her fifty-five years and more — this old face, tanned and, so to speak, honeycombed with great wrinkles. It was a really animal face and revealed a very primitive, very untrained nature, but without that low craftiness which disgraced the face of her daughter. Habituated to command always, whether it were the flattering Marguerite and the gentle Monica or the dreamy Franquetot, the Auvergnate hid no feeling of her soul; and as she just now had had in her voice and smile all the graces of welcome of which her rustic person was capable, as long as she was ignorant of the object of Michel's visit, so her look and tone betrayed all the sourness of her rancour when the young man said to her, as he came up the stairs: —

"I have come to prepare for the removal of Monica's things."

"Oh! she has gone to stay with you, has she?" the woman said. "I might have expected it."

"She is not there now, aunt," Michel replied. "But she will be very soon, for I am going to marry her; and I came to announce my marriage to my uncle." And before Madame Franquetot had been able to express, even by an exclamation, her amazement at this wonderful news, he went on: "I have to say to you at once, aunt, that I allow not the slightest remark upon

this, which is my irrevocable determination. Give me the key to my *fiancée's* room. That is all I ask of you, and I will excuse you from saying anything whatever on the subject."

Michel had said these last words in a tone so imperative, and there emanated from his whole meagre person such a character of almost fierce resolution, that Madame Franquetot remained for a minute silenced by it. But her discomposure quickly changed into an attack of positive indignation at the manner in which he, whom she had selected so many years ago for a son-in-law, and who had thus disappointed her, suddenly conducted himself toward her daughter. Marguerite, attracted by the sound of voices, appeared from the adjoining room. She came forward to meet her cousin with extended hand, as usual. The latter, in presence of the slanderer, was no longer able to control his nerves. He looked at the girl, from head to foot, with the most insulting contempt; then, without taking any notice of her extended hand, turned his back upon her, and said to his aunt: —

"Where is the key, please?"

"Marguerite has the key," cried Madame Franquetot, blazing out, "and I forbid her to give it you. I forbid her! If your thief wishes to remove her things, let her come and do it herself. We have an account to settle, and I promise you I will give her a good setting-down, the hussy!"

"Aunt!" Michel interrupted furiously. He had grown very pale, and stepped forward with clenched fists. Then, stopping, he shook his head again and again, vehemently, as if to drive away the temptation that had just seized him to silence by force the woman who was insulting his *fiancée*. "No," he said to himself in a very low voice, "no, no." Then, addressing his uncle's wife again, but as if she were a stranger: "I shall come again to-morrow," he said, "to see about this matter. I shall bring a man with me, and the boxes and ropes that will be needed. I hope that you will have reflected, and that you will spare yourselves, — you and Monsieur Franquetot, — and that you will spare us, — Monica and me, — the disgrace of having the door opened by the police that we may take away what belongs to us. Do not drive me to extremities. You see that I am now perfectly calm, but I could not answer for myself if you ever speak to me again as you have just now done."

"Oh, *maman!*" exclaimed Marguerite, when the young sculptor had disappeared through the door which opened at the foot of the stairs. "You see how she has bewitched him? You saw how he treated me? And you, *maman*, how he threatened you when you wanted to tell him about her! I tell you he will marry her! He will marry her! Nothing makes any difference to him, nothing, nothing! Oh! if we only could prevent it!"

"I will prevent it," replied Madame Franquetot. Then, after a silence in which her face assumed a singular expressive look, she continued: "Go to your work as usual. Your father must not miss this beggar girl. He is so crazy about his furniture that he would be capable of forgiving her, if he found that his work could not get along without her. But this marriage shall never take place. I will find a way, my Gote. Trust to me!"

Exasperated still by what she regarded as her nephew's outrageous conduct, the angry mother had on the instant devised a way, which she believed infallible, to prevent his marriage with Monica — a marriage doubly monstrous, it seemed to her: in the first place, she knew the feelings of Marguerite toward Michel, and she could not tolerate that there should be preferred to her daughter — who? An illegitimate child of parents completely unknown; brought up by whom? By Marguerite's own father and mother as a matter of charity! And, then, she believed, in good faith, that Monica had stolen the securities, and that the intriguing creature, so to bewitch Michel, as she evidently had done, must have lied to him shamelessly. If, now, there could be furnished to the young man an unquestionable proof of Monica's falsehood, his blind confidence in her would give way to indignation against so much duplicity. This proof existed. To Madame Franquetot, as well as to her husband, the five hundred francs that Monica

had given them represented the price of the bond sold to the money-changer. It was a restitution made in the first moments of terror to secure herself from a criminal prosecution. Madame Franquetot was sure that a money-changer would require a receipt before paying so large a sum, especially to a person unknown to him. It was this receipt, signed by Monica, that was to be that undoubted proof of crime, before which none of the fictions invented by the thief could stand.

"I must have that receipt! But how shall I get it?" This question the determined peasant woman turned over and over in her mind as she went on washing her dishes. It will be remembered that she had sent her daughter back into the atelier at the accustomed hour, instead of keeping her to continue the conversation, however interesting it would have been to do this. Likewise, she had gone on with her accustomed work, quite as if she were not suffering from the most intense excitement she had, perhaps, ever experienced in her life. It is one of the deep-rooted traits of the rustic nature to go on with the day's work whatever may be the anxiety or the distress. Any one who had seen Françoise give a final rub to her kitchen floor and then look at it with the glance of the diligent and satisfied housewife, would certainly never have suspected that she was proposing to take, her work once done, a very decisive and important step. While she had been scouring, with sandstone and a chemical preparation made by herself in

accordance with an ancient recipe, the saucepan in which the morning meal had been cooked, she had been going over, in her own mind, the various procedures that could be employed, from an appeal to the police to a personal visit made by herself to the money-changer, and had finally decided on this latter. She would have been very glad to communicate this decision to her daughter, but she feared attracting her husband's notice if she should go down into the workshop, or if she should call Marguerite to come up. She knew by instinct that he would forbid her to carry out her plan; and she did not want this prohibition to be made, for she would not have dared to disobey it. And so it was with stealthy steps on the stairs, and doors opened and shut with the precautions of an evil-doer — as Monica had done a few days before — that she went out of her house. She had put on, for the occasion, her Sunday gown, her most ceremonious bonnet, her black thread gloves; and she had taken in her hand a little bag, containing identifying papers for herself in case of need. She was so disturbed at the thought of what she was about to do, unknown to her husband, that she felt herself growing red at some joke made by the concierge on seeing her pass in her Sunday attire.

Her anxiety redoubled when she reached the rue de Sèvres, near the Bon Marché, and saw two shops of money-changers, one nearly opposite the other. Which should she enter? She went from one shop window to

the other, intimidated, she knew not why, by the glitter of the gold pieces heaped up in wooden bowls, and the figures on the bonds which were exhibited to the gazer's eye. She decided on the smaller of the two shops, simply because there were two women in attendance, one all gray-headed, the other all blond, a mother and daughter doubtless, and no man to be seen in the back room. It seemed to her she should be able to explain herself more easily; and, in fact, when she had opened the door, on which was visible, in metal letters, the engaging name of the money-dealer, *Cadeau-Bonnet*, the conversation that was going on inside was of a nature to reassure her as to the reception the gray-haired woman would give to her strange request. Madame Cadeau-Bonnet — for it was the *patronne* herself — was holding a consultation with a poor-looking person, a widow, apparently, clothed in black, who held in her hand a package of papers.

"If you will wait till Monsieur Cadeau-Bonnet returns," the *patronne* was saying, "he will explain things to you better than I can. He will be here in thirty-five minutes. But I am sure that my advice is good. In less than three months each one of your bonds will be worth a hundred francs more than it is now. There is no good reason for the price being so low. We know this from the best authority. Do not be afraid. You have never yet lost anything by following our advice, you know."

Such is the patriarchal character which the handling of humble savings assumes in the popular quarters of Paris — which, in many respects, are so much like the provinces. The money-changer is, for the legion of petty clerks, servants, concierges, working-men, who lay aside every six months, every other year, a few bank-notes and desire to make them earn a little, the sole adviser as to all investments. The singular lack of initiative, which is one of the traits of the autochthonic Frenchman, manifests itself in his confusion of mind before the mysteries of speculation. Lucky he is to fall into the hands of honest people, like the Cadeau-Bonnets, who take no advantage of the sheeplike docility of their customer. Evidently the gray-haired woman, whose shrewd face expressed real goodness of heart as well, and whose dress revealed former habits of elegance and, doubtless, better circumstances, had never given her present customer anything but judicious advice, for the latter gathered up the handful of papers which she had just submitted for examination, saying: —

"I will wait, then, Madame Cadeau-Bonnet, but I am very much afraid — if I had not inherited these securities, I never would have bought them, that is certain. What I like is a piece of land, a house, something that you can see, and touch, and that will not run away."

"And you, madame, what can I do for you?" said the *patronne*, addressing Madame Franquetot, as the other woman turned away from the little window.

Françoise looked around her at the other persons who were now waiting their turn; she hesitated a moment, and then said:—

"What I have to say to you, madame, is something entirely confidential, and I cannot speak before any other persons."

"Very well, I will see you inside," said the money-changer's wife, after having scanned the face of this hesitating client. Her occupation had rendered her so good a physiognomist that she knew at once that the person she had to deal with was neither a fool nor an adventuress. She accordingly led Madame Franquetot into the little room behind the shop, which served her husband, herself, and her daughter, as their place of rest. Here they had their noonday meal. Here they wrote their private letters. A sewing machine testified that Mademoiselle Céleste Cadeau-Bonnet sometimes devoted herself to more feminine occupations. The wirework partition was hung with green serge, leaving free above it about a foot, just space to admit daylight enough to avoid using gas by day.

Seated here, Madame Franquetot, after giving her name and showing her receipt for house rent, began relating the story which she had prepared in advance as justification of the step she was taking. It was a well-constructed tale, half truth, half falsehood, such as married women of her class in life are very capable of putting together and repeating. An orphan who lived

with them had been sent by Monsieur Franquetot, four days before, to sell a bond. She had brought back a sum of money in regard to which they felt some doubt whether it were the exact sum or not; and Madame Franquetot herself had come to get the truth by looking at the receipt.

"You mean the memorandum of the purchase," replied Madame Cadeau-Bonnet, who at once observed a certain reticence in her visitor's words, and a trifle of embarrassment in the voice. In all shops of this kind the constant care of these petty stockbrokers is to avoid the purchase of stolen securities. This is not merely a matter of self-interest with them. It is a question of respectability; and when, by chance, such an error has been committed, they hasten to repair it without legal intervention, the better to prove that they had acted in good faith. Madame Cadeau-Bonnet therefore desired to be satisfied on this subject, and, with some diplomacy, in her turn, she said to Madame Franquetot: —

"If the bond was sold to us this week, madame, the memorandum is there, with the others, but I cannot show it to you. We make no exception to this rule, except where there has been theft."

"There has been theft," said Madame Franquetot, after a second interval of hesitation, which was in itself an answer; "but I did not wish to say this until I was perfectly sure."

"And what is the amount of the bond which was stolen?" asked the *patronne*.

"That is something we do not know," Madame Franquetot said; "it was one of a package of securities which were found in the seat of an arm-chair that had been sent us for repairs. But we know this, and with certainty, that it was sold for at least five hundred francs. *That* has been acknowledged."

"And who is the person who sold this bond?"

"Mademoiselle Monica."

"And you say four days ago?" Madame Cadeau-Bonnet again inquired. Then, on an affirmative reply, she went into the front part of the office. She had left the door open, and Madame Franquetot perceived that she began talking with her daughter in a manner showing great displeasure. She then went to look for the memorandum, and on finding it, uttered an expression of surprise. Returning into the back room with this sheet of paper, she showed it to the inquirer, saying:—

"This is all that I find, madame. My daughter remembers that on Tuesday last, about six o'clock, she, being alone in the office at the time, bought for cash a bond of a person who gave her name as Mademoiselle Monica, residing rue Oudinot, in the house of Monsieur Franquetot. This person had her savings bank book in her own name, several envelopes of letters, and a receipt for rent made out to Monsieur Franquetot, the same probably that you have just shown me. She said

that she had been sent by her *patron*, who had suddenly to make a payment. On seeing these papers my daughter paid the money. She was very wrong in doing this. She is only a beginner; she has no experience. But this bond cannot be the one you are looking for, for you speak of five hundred francs, and what we paid was only two hundred and fifteen. See for yourself."

Madame Franquetot took the memorandum, and there she saw: "*Comptoir Saint-Placide. C. Cadeau-Bonnet, changeur. Rue de Sèvres 95, à l'angle de la rue Saint-Placide. Acheté de Mademoiselle Monique, 8 bis rue Oudinot, le 7 avril 1900, — 2/4 Ville de Paris 1871, 107 fr. 50 —215 fr,*" and upon the stamp of receipt, the person who had sold the bond and received the money had signed "Monica."

The mother of Marguerite had no sooner beheld this signature than an expression of amazement appeared upon her face. Again she looked at the figures "215," and again at this signature. The change in her face was so alarming that Madame Cadeau-Bonnet exclaimed: "What is it, madame? What is the matter? You are ill?" The questions brought back the poor woman to a consciousness of the situation. She returned the memorandum: "Thank you, madame," she said. "It is not what I supposed, certainly. There is a mistake." And, as if she had been herself the person guilty of the forgery which she had just discovered, she went out of the shop with bent head, stammering apologies, while

the two women looked at each other amazed; and the mother said to her daughter: —

"The good woman made a mistake, it seems. Or else there is something more in this than we understand. For once, I shall not tell your father. But be sure you never do such a thing again. It is far too dangerous, buying a bond of a person we do not know. You have the proof of it."

"The young lady was dressed so neatly," replied Mademoiselle Céleste Cadeau-Bonnet. "Her hat and cape were so very nice. Her papers were all in such good order, the envelope of each letter so carefully cut! It was only once, for a moment, that I had the least doubt: when I made her sign the memorandum. I thought then that she hesitated, and was going to refuse. But it was only for a moment, and then she took the pen and wrote so readily. See — "

All students of human nature who have followed closely the proceedings in courts, especially in the provinces, are familiar with this singular law in criminal mentality among the lower classes, and especially among peasants: to an extreme complication in plan revealing the most inventive and subtle strategy, they invariably unite a clumsiness in means which is astonishing, so illogical is the lack of forethought which it betrays. Thus the impulsive Marguerite, while displaying a real genius for wickedness in this attempt to ruin Monica and, by disgracing her, prevent her marriage, had left a

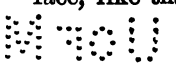
signature at the foot of the memorandum whose production would suffice to destroy at one blow the whole edifice of her schemes.

It must be said, however, that in going to offer the bond at a money-changer's shop, she had not been aware that she should be obliged to write anything whatever. In her surprise, on being called upon to give this receipt, she had had that moment of hesitation which Céleste had remarked; but, fearing to compromise herself, had not ventured to refuse the signature. She had, however, in writing the name, instinctively taken the precaution to make the letters a little larger than her own habitual handwriting. With that incredible feeling of security which, in these passionate and primitive temperaments, accompanies the execution of their projects, she had said to herself that if the matter were ever investigated she would thus be able to deny what she had done. And then, in the savage ardour of her hatred, this point had passed entirely from her mind. It had never occurred to her that the signature might be examined when she was not present, and so would not have the opportunity to suggest an explanation; and, moreover, with a fact added to it which attested still more positively the innocence of her victim. This fact was the discrepancy between the two hundred and fifteen francs mentioned on the memorandum and the five hundred francs offered by Monica for the repurchase of the bond she was accused of having stolen.

In the mind of Madame Franquetot, who had come to the comptoir Saint-Placide with the sure hope of finally obtaining absolutely certain proof against Monica, this sudden revelation of two circumstances so completely favourable to the young girl would naturally, and as a matter of fact did, produce an entire change.

"But it was Marguerite's writing!" she said to herself, as she went along by the shops and stalls of that crowded portion of the rue de Sèvres which leads from the rue du Bac to the boulevard. "It was a little larger, but it certainly is hers! And the other one could not imitate it like that. And why should she? How can I tell? It is very strange, however! But if it was Monica who sold the bond," she was beginning to admit, however reluctantly, that there might be a doubt as to the person who had committed the theft, "why did she give us back five hundred francs instead of two hundred and fifteen?"

Although her brain had been obscured, as has been only too evident from the beginning of this humble domestic tragedy, by the most unreasoning of partialities, the fondness of a mother jealous on her daughter's behalf, this peasant woman from the mountains was supremely honest. Françoise Franquetot was capable of many bad things, but only on condition of her being unconscious of their wickedness. She was incapable of committing the slightest wrong act knowingly. Her face, like that of some rough, faithful animal, was the



living mirror of her character. There was in her a blending of instinctive brutality and uncompromising uprightness. It was this sincerity, rude and uncouth, but so savoury, that had made her endured, and, more than that, loved, by a man so refined and sensitive as Franquetot. She could, in her stupidity, misunderstand the plainest realities. But to know that she had "done any harm," as she herself would say, to any one, were it her worst enemy, and not make amends for that harm, was a thing impossible for her.

Not once during her walk homeward through that rue de Sèvres, and then the rue Rousselet, to her abode in the rue Oudinot, was she tempted to say: "So much the worse for Monica! Why didn't she defend herself?" Yet that would have let her off from prolonging an investigation, at the conclusion of which her slow but honest mind perceived a vague something, indefinite, unknown, but even now, in the mere presentiment of it, intensely painful to her. For she had, indeed, something like a presentiment of what the result must be, though without as yet putting it clearly in words. But unless the truth had appeared to her, though confusedly and remotely, from the moment she recognized Marguerite's handwriting on the stamp of the memorandum, would she have experienced that sudden terror under the eyes of Madame Cadeau-Bonnet? Would she have trembled so at the idea that her daughter's hand had indeed written that name? Would she have had that

shock, as if before a suddenly opened abyss, that irresistible need of following it up, of getting home as soon as possible, and questioning her daughter, and understanding it all? As eagerly as she had sought to prove the case against Monica when she believed her guilty, so resolutely now, in the presence of a sign that her first belief had been mistaken, was she determined to sift this matter to the bottom, even though the result should be the most mortifying to herself.

"And if it was Marguerite's signature," she concluded, having spent the first half-hour after reaching home in going over the case, by turns bringing up and abandoning the various suppositions of which it admitted, "if it *was* her signature, then it was she who sold the bond. And, then, it must have been she who took it — and the others, too? And hid them in the lining of Monica's dress? To save herself and ruin the other? No! That is impossible."

The reflections which had led the prosaic Françoise to say these things to herself, involving as they did so painful a suspicion, had been profound indeed, for the frugal house-mother, perhaps for the first time in her life, had not changed her street dress for her usual, well-worn skirt, substantial jacket, and blue apron. She had taken a seat, without even removing her bonnet, and there she remained, the heavy soles of her large shoes placed flat upon the red floor, her strong, gloved hands open upon her knees, in that ruminating attitude

of the peasant, which her Sunday array, in the midst of the shining copper of the saucepans and the glitter of the dishes, rendered still more picturesque.

She emerged from this meditation with the brusque motion of one who is determined, at all hazards, to put an end to a torturing uncertainty, and went into the passageway to knock thrice with the broom-handle on a certain spot in the floor. This part of the landing was exactly over the tapestry workroom. For many years Madame Franquetot had employed this method of calling her daughter without going downstairs and without incurring the expense of putting up a bell. A minute had scarcely elapsed before Marguerite appeared. She could not restrain an exclamation of surprise on seeing her mother dressed to go out, and at once asked her whither she was going and what decision she had come to.

"I am not going anywhere. I have just come in," the mother replied. The two women had gone now into the kitchen. Madame Franquetot perceived at the end of a shelf a broken bowl in which were placed an old pen and a small bottle of ink, which she was in the habit of using for her accounts, with what spelling one may imagine! She had quickly found a leaf of white paper, and she now placed these writing materials on a table, first clearing it from various utensils with which it had been covered. Then, pushing forward a chair, she said to her daughter, —

"Sit down there and write."

"What shall I write?" asked Marguerite.

"Only your name," was the reply.

"But why?" said the girl, astonished.

"Write your name, and you will know directly."

When her daughter had obeyed, Madame Franquetot took up the paper and looked at the signature with extreme attention. She then laid the paper again before her daughter, and said:—

"Write your name a little larger." And when Marguerite had done this, "Now write Monica's name, and a little larger also," the mother added.

"But why, *maman?*" again the girl asked. The mother's face, and the singular nature of the preparations made, had begun to alarm her. Her anxiety had increased when she had been bidden to sign her name, first as usual, and then in larger letters, like those which she now so well remembered on the memorandum at the money-changer's. The last command had brought this anxiety to its height. She sought, however, to obey, but her hand trembled so, after the first two letters, that she dropped the pen, while the mother, at this silent, and so much the more unquestionable, confession, cried out in a tone of agony:—

"Wretched girl! It was you, then! It is no use to deny it," she continued. "I have been at the money-changer's. I have seen the receipt for the money that you received. Where is that money, first? What have

you done with those two hundred and fifteen francs? Answer me, what have you done with them? To steal them was shameful, but to try to hide your theft by accusing some one else was infamous!"

"No, *maman!*" protested Marguerite. "I did not do that. I have the money here. I will give it all back I didn't want to steal. I have not stolen. I did it to get my revenge — for no other reason. Monica and Michel were together every day; they used to meet in the rue Masseran. I knew it; I had seen them there. He used to write to her. He was going to marry her. Then, the other day, there were those papers in the drawer. They tempted me. I took five, that is true — but not for the money, *maman*, I swear to you, not for the money! I took the papers so that I could put them in her room, and have papa find them and turn her out of the house. And Michel would not marry her. That is what I did, nothing but that."

"I should rather you had stolen just for stealing," groaned the mother. "Yes, indeed! You take a thing, you may repent, you may restore it. But that you, my daughter, you should be so vicious, so base! Ah! wretched, wretched girl!" And, in a fit of furious passion, the peasant woman seizing her child by both arms forced her down to her knees on the floor, and cried: "Beg my pardon that you have made me do what you have! For you have made me bear false witness to your father. I have done it, I, Françoise Franque-

tot, who never wronged a person out of a penny in my life. Beg my pardon, and do it quickly!"

"Pardon, pardon, *maman!*" cried the girl. "Pardon! You are hurting me! Oh, let me go; don't hold me so hard! Listen! When you are jealous, you suffer so! You are almost crazy. It holds you; it turns you round; it drags you about. It devours you. You are not yourself any longer. I was mad. I will never do so any more, never, never!"

"But when you saw us, your father and me, looking for those papers, and we were so sorry, did that not touch your heart? We are not rich people, your father and I. We have not our thousands or our hundreds. We have nothing but our honour. We ourselves might have been suspected; we ought to have been. This had nothing to do with Monica, nor with your cousin; it concerned us — us whom that girl has the right to despise. She only sought a pretext to be ungrateful, and you gave it to her. It is she who has the upper hand, now! I am sure that she suspected the truth; that it was you who were the guilty one. That is why Michel would not speak to you. And she only wanted to be quits with us! How could you let us take her five hundred francs, when you knew we had no right to it? But I have found a way to punish you. You shall restore it to her, yourself, with your own hands, her five hundred francs."

"No, *maman*," Marguerite said, getting up from her

knees. "You will not ask me to do that;" and with a terror-stricken face she implored: "No. No. I will not do it. I will never do that!"

"You will do it," the mother said. "Your father and I can make you do it. And so, at least, she will not be able to say that we were your accomplices."

"You are going to speak to my father?" the girl begged, joining her hands in more terrified entreaty than before. "Ah! *maman*, I will return the money myself to Monica; I will beg her pardon. But do not tell papa! Did you see when he thought it was Monica how angry he was? He would kill me! *Maman*, I implore you, do not speak to him! Do not speak to him!" She came close to her mother, and took hold of her dress; she tried to embrace her and to keep her from leaving the room. This idea that her act was to be made known to her father completely overwhelmed her. The implacable mother thrust her away with a gesture that was as brutal as a blow, saying:—

"You should have thought of that before. Your father shall know all, and know it immediately. He shall never be able to reproach me with having had such a thing as this on my conscience and keeping it from him. He is the man, and the house is his. I am his wife, and you are his daughter. I will not be undutiful toward him." And joining the action to the word, she began to call, "Franquetot! Franquetot!" Then, fearing that her daughter might escape,

she ran back to her, caught her by the wrist, and, holding her as in a vise, dragged her first out into the passageway and then, as her husband still did not answer, halfway down the stairs, and again called, "Franquetot!"

In this position the old cabinet-maker found the two — Marguerite struggling to get away and Françoise almost crushing her in her powerful grasp. This scene of silent strife — with the workmen only two steps away — between this mother and daughter, announced some domestic event so serious and so unexpected that, as if by instinct, the father perceived the importance of its having no witnesses. He closed the door of the atelier in silence, his wife having now dragged her prisoner back to the upper floor; and it was only when they were all in the kitchen, and he was quite certain they could not be overheard, that he separated the two combatants, taking Madame Franquetot with one hand and Marguerite with he other, and said —

"What is all this? What have you done to your mother, Gote? Calm yourself, Françoise." Then, again speaking to his daughter, "Do you think I have not had trouble enough these last few days without your adding to it?"

VI

EXPLANATIONS

THERE is nothing more alarming, in the tragic circumstances of life, than silence in certain cases where one expected an explosion. One trembles in advance at the expected bolt, but one is much more alarmed at a composure, which can only conceal a more implacable, more irremediable determination. This terror at silence Marguerite Franquetot felt to the degree that she was obliged to sit down — so dissolved, as it were, was her whole being merely in enduring her father's look while her mother related, with harsh, crude words that went straight to the point, the incidents of the last two hours: her conversation with Michel Tavernier and the affront offered to Marguerite; her own anger; her visit to the money-changer for the purpose of seeing Monica's signature; the handwriting that she recognized to be Marguerite's; and all that followed. Franquetot had listened to this recital without a word or gesture. For those who knew his habitual open-heartedness, this immobility, joined to the almost livid pallor of his face, revealed an interior agitation so intense and overmastering that anything, even murder, might be its outcome.

When his wife had ceased speaking he still remained silent for some minutes, which appeared interminable to the offender; then, addressing her, he spoke in a voice which startled both the women, so profound was its solemnity, but without that indignant anger that they were expecting. Even that would have been better than the cold and infinitely sad severity with which he asked, —

"Do you acknowledge the truth of all that your mother has told me?"

"Yes, father," she replied, "but —"

"Do not interrupt me," he resumed, "merely reply to my questions. Do you understand that in conducting yourself as you have done you have committed an abominable act? Yes, abominable! Toward this poor girl, first, who has neither father nor mother, and has been brought up with you as a sister, and you were willing, had there not been a noble heart to protect her, to see her turned out of doors, thrown into the street helpless, friendless, disgraced; then, toward your mother and me, whom you made your accomplices in this frightful wrong; and why? Because we could not for a moment suspect you of such a thing. Toward yourself, lastly; for do you think you could have helped being frightfully unhappy with this burden upon your soul and the consciousness that Monica knew all? For her conduct proves that she knows what you have done; and Michel also. And you would have been obliged to

endure every hour, every minute of your life, the idea of their contempt! Is this, also, true? Do you feel that it is true? Answer me!"

"It is true, father," said Marguerite.

"I shall inflict no punishment on you," Franquetot continued. "Your offence is too great. If you repent, I shall see it. I shall never speak of this to you again. You will know that I have forgiven you when I kiss you again. From this day till then, you will be to me as a stranger. It rests with you to deserve it if I ever again call you my daughter. This is all I have to say to you. Now go wash your eyes, that no one may see you have been crying, and come back to your work."

"Why did you not punish her, my man?" asked Françoise Franquetot, when Marguerite had left the room. Neither of the women had ventured to interrupt the father while he was speaking. He had shown in the words which he had addressed to his daughter that remarkable dignity which he had at times. Men like himself, the half-artisan, half-artist, at certain moments naturally assume the manners, having already the feelings, of a very high social grade. And, again, they revert to the rudeness of their own class and occupation. A few hours before, Franquetot had received and treated his nephew almost brutally, having yielded to the lower impulses of his temperament. He had now, in his conduct toward Marguerite, manifested the refinement of his nature, that which made him an aristo-

crat in his way, a poet as to his work, a lover of the Ideal, an enthusiast. The explanation which he gave of this conduct could not, certainly, be thoroughly comprehended by the loyal, but coarse-natured, creature whom the accident of destiny had imposed on him as a companion. And still she felt its deep humanity, for, as he spoke, she had to wipe away the tears this confession of her "man," as she called him, wrung from her. For lack of the apron, a corner of which usually served her in cases of like need, she employed the gloves that she still had on her hands — another very significant proof that this series of astounding events had, so to speak, caused her to be no longer herself. And the black thread fingers left their marks, a comically pathetic detail, in long streaks upon her red face.

"Why did I not punish her?" Franquetot replied. "Because, as I looked at her while you were talking to me, I saw her as a little child, here in this same room, where she used to be playing with Monica; and I felt, suddenly, that her having come to hate the other girl so much was not altogether her own fault. Long ago I saw the beginnings of this antipathy, and in you, also, my poor wife; do not deny it. But you were very just toward her, and you have to-day proved this yet once more by clearing the innocent as soon as you knew her to be so. But still, neither did you love her. In the three days that she has been gone, this has been made

so clear to me! You were happy because she was no longer in your house, because you no longer heard her coming and going, no longer saw my affection for her. For it is I who am the real cause of this rancour that you, both of you, feel toward Monica. I was too happy in being with her, that is true; and I showed it too freely. I ought to have remembered that you have the right of precedence, my wife, and Gote, my child. I ought to have thought that you both would be jealous. But you know, in Monica and in Michel, it was for the beautiful carved things that I loved them. They understood them so well. The beautiful carved wood is something I am insane about. Then, too, I have never shown you as I ought, what I really feel for you. This embittered you toward the other. And when, besides, came this jealousy as to Michel, the child was crazed; she did wrong, very wrong; but while she is to blame, I also am not innocent in this matter. This is why I could not punish her. To force her to beg pardon of Monica, as you wished, was so harsh! I am the father. It is I who am responsible. I shall ask pardon on her behalf."

"You, *mon ami*, ask pardon!" cried Françoise; "you, a man such as you are, who have always lived for others — and pardon of Monica, who owes everything to you!" And with an effort, which for a moment gave to her rough-hewn features the exalted expression of voluntary martyrdom: "It is true, my man," she continued, "that I do not love that girl. It is true that I hate her. This

is something I cannot help. She has made my child wicked. She has taken her cousin from her. And besides that, it is true that I am jealous. It is so hard for me, *mon ami*, to be so stupid, and not always understand when you are talking. She has had time and education and brains. She has known you all her life. It was too late for me when I began to know you. I could scarcely read and write. All I knew how to do was to be your servant. Well now, *I* will go and ask her pardon, since somebody must do it. But not you — not you!"

"Yes, I," repeated Franquetot. "You forget it was I who sent her away. It is I who must bring her back."

"You are going to bring her back?" said the wife.

"And you are going to receive her," he insisted. "We must do this, to make amends for what Marguerite did. We must do it. And I promise you this, you will never again be jealous. Before this I knew that I loved you, and I knew your worth. But I did not know all."

He held out his arms, and the two clasped each other in a long embrace. They had exchanged words too sincere, they had gone too deeply into each other's souls, for Françoise, after the first impulse of revolt had passed, to try to persuade her husband to abandon a resolution which, after all, was in conformity with the idea which her mind, imbued with the strong customs of her native mountains, held, as to the rôle of a head of the family. If there be, as her sturdy Catholic faith believes, a place of purifying fire after death, the min-

utes which followed that conversation will assuredly be credited to her on the purgatorial account.

"Bring me my hat and coat," Franquetot had said. "I must go to her at once." Françoise brought them, and aided her husband in putting on the coat, and went herself, seeing that the weather seemed doubtful, to look for the one umbrella possessed by the family. Finally, she watched him go downstairs, and when he had shut the door after him she sat down again and began crying, with big tears which fell, fell, rolled down her face, spotted the waist of her Sunday gown, of which she no longer thought, and in the simplicity of her grief she sobbed: —

"He was right. We shall be quits after this. All the same, if we had never taken that child, all this would never have happened. This is what comes of being too tender-hearted. One gets punished for it."

If Franquetot had heard this exclamation, in which was summed up that strict philosophy of mine and thine so natural to the working-class, who earn their bread by daily labour, perhaps he would have felt even more that which he already felt so keenly at this moment, namely, the profound difference existing between himself and his own family, and the resemblance, on the contrary, — too wide-reaching, too intimate, — between his own heart and that of this adopted child whom he now went to seek. He had been very sincere just now in his self-reproach for his partiality

toward Monica, as he had been very lucid in his view of the character of Marguerite and of the ravages produced in it by jealousy of the other girl. But to reproach one's self for an inclination, a feeling, a preference, is not to cease feeling it; and as he walked on toward the avenue du Maine and the studio of Michel, which was the only place where he could obtain Monica's address, the old artist fell once more, in spite of himself, into the fault that he had confessed to his wife. He almost forgot both the wife and the daughter in his delight at regaining the child of his soul and having no longer cause to suspect her of evil. When he had inquired of the porter of the kind of *cité* in which his nephew was lodged whether Monsieur Tavernier were in, and had received an affirmative response, he was obliged to wait for a few minutes, so violent was the beating of his heart.

The studio, which had the number "7" over the door, was one of the cells in a hive composed of a number of similar apartments, all on the ground floor, with little bedrooms overhead belonging with them. There were eighteen, nine on each side, arranged along a central paved walk, which ended at the long shed of a truckage office. The speculator who, while waiting for a rise in the value of this ground, had run up by contract these light structures, whose walls were entirely of hollow bricks, rented them so cheaply that the eighteen studios were almost always occupied.

This little barrack, divided into equal compartments, was a symbol of the enregimenting that necessarily goes on in a community tending more and more to equality and the dead level, even among existences the least susceptible of classification. Independence and Bohemianism resumed their rights behind the high windows, through which visitors to this caravansary of artists could see hanging on the walls, mouldings in plaster and weapons, canvases half painted and musical instruments, all the incoherent and picturesque decoration of abodes of this kind.

It is very probable that if one of the all-powerful genii of the Arabian tales had thrown open, all at once, the eighteen doors, the views presented by these abodes of free artists in their earliest stages, would not all have had the character, pathetic and truly "young," — in the noblest sense of that much-profaned, beautiful word, — that the atelier of Michel Tavernier presented to the eyes of his uncle when the latter had at last decided to knock, and the sculptor had called out simply, "Come in!"

Monica sat there, in a chair placed on the broad pedestal used for models, with head bare, her beautiful fair hair gathered as usual in a tawny mass, whence escaped some unruly curls, — perfectly modest and simple, in her working-dress, and an apron with shoulder-straps; and the active child was busy with a bit of sewing.

To appease the bitter feelings which Michel had

brought back from his visit in the rue Oudinot, she herself had offered now to pose for the bust which he had long dreamed of making. Heretofore, she had always said to him, "After we are married." But seeing him in such a state of irritation, she had proposed to him to make a beginning on this work in the few days that would be left to her free before she should go to her new *patron*. She had thought that these sittings would dispel the young man's anger; and for herself, she would take the opportunity to begin hemming and marking her humble trousseau for their approaching marriage. Responding to Michel's entire confidence in her by a confidence no less generous, she had no scruple at these long hours alone with the young man in his studio, nor did she fear that her presence there would be misjudged. And besides, with tacit accord, the key had been left in the door. At sight of his uncle, the sculptor's fingers, busy in roughing out the huge lump of clay, stopped in their work, and Monica grew as white as the towel she was hemming. Franquetot was no less agitated than they. It was he, however, who first broke the silence. He came forward with a firm step, and uniting them in an appellation which, in itself, was a disavowal of all the unjust severity he had shown: —

"My children," he said, "I have come to ask your pardon — pardon from both of you. From you, Monica, for my conduct toward you day before yesterday; from

you, Michel, for all that I said this morning. I have been deceived, shamefully deceived. Now I know all. That unhappy girl has confessed everything."

"Ah! *parrain*, dear *parrain!*" cried Monica, springing from her chair, and, clasped in Franquetot's arms, she continued: "Do not go on, do not say another word! Keep silent! We have no wish to know anything more, only that you believe in me again! That is all we want, is it not, Michel? And to have you consent to our marriage. The rest is no matter, you see; it is all over and ended. That was all that mattered. I was sure the truth would be known some day; I did not think it would be so soon. And you wanted to have us know it immediately! Thanks! thanks! You are so kind! I have been very sad these last days. But it is all repaid now! All. With you two like this, no one in the world can do me any harm now."

As she spoke, and while thus clinging to her adoptive father, the lovely girl had drawn her *fiancé* toward her that she might unite the hands of the two men, and with tears of joy in her eyes she went on: "This is my betrothal day, do you see? You must both make me a present! Will you give me what I ask for, both of you? Michel, is it a promise?"

"Yes," he said.

"And you, *parrain?*"

Franquetot said yes; and Monica resumed: "Well then, what I ask of you both is that neither of you will

be displeased with any person on my account. With any person, do you understand me, Michel? You have promised. You did not keep your promise perfectly, before. You have one fault to be forgiven for, now."

The smile on her pathetic lips was so sweet, in her eyes, wet with emotion, there was such an engaging entreaty not to spoil for her this moment of supreme felicity, her dainty head was bent on her slender neck with so much coquettish grace, the features of her delicate face were so lighted up with a lovely, imploring earnestness, that the lover of this adorable girl felt all his rancour against those who had persecuted her — one perfidiously, the other ignorantly — melt away, and he replied,—

"I will obey you, Monica. All is forgotten."

"And you, *parrain?*"

"It is not mine to forget," said Franquetot. "It is yours."

"No, no. It is yours also," she rejoined, shaking her pretty head. Never was her resemblance to the eighteenth-century portraits, which had so often struck the old *ébéniste,* more striking than at this moment. What blood was it that flowed in the veins of this foundling? He had often and often asked himself this; he had thought that it must be noble blood; and his idolatry for her had been augmented by all his worship for the shades of the *grandes dames,* in whose service the Oebens and Rieseners had wrought their marvels. At this

moment, when she displayed, as by the inborn aristocracy of her lovely nature, so much instinctive magnanimity, a generosity so spontaneous, she was, in truth, even in her simple dress, a little patrician standing between her two servants; and the old workman answered her at last, summing up all his impressions in one word, which, in the mouth of this worshipper of Louis Seize and Marie Antoinette, was the most sovereign of compliments: —

"You shall be obeyed, Madame la Reine. Besides," he continued, "you shall see for yourself; for I am here to take you home with me. I told them in the shop that you had gone out of town for a few days to do some work, and if you return now your absence will scarcely have been noticed."

At these words of Franquetot, the young girl had drawn away from him. The smile in her eyes and on her lips had faded. She walked across the room and back two or three times, as if the reply that she was going to make to this good man, whom she loved so much, would cost her dear. At last, stopping before him and gravely, tenderly, timidly, also, like one about to touch an open wound, yet feeling that his duty compels him to touch it, she said: —

"No, *parrain;* I shall not go home with you. I will go to-morrow or the day after — you must let me choose the day — to visit you with Michel. But I shall never live there any more. I have no unkind feeling toward

any one, believe me. I love you, ah! as I should love an own father; and I am very grateful to Madame Franquetot. I have forgiven Marguerite. But do you not see it yourself? It is not my place to be there. Just as soon as I began to cause them unhappiness, it was my duty to go away. It is your wife, and it is your daughter. I respect them. They are at home in their own house and yours, and I, — though you treat me as your child, — I am not one of your family. You know, just as I do, that my presence there was painful to them before. Now it could be only a punishment. Do not ask me to inflict this; and do not inflict it yourself. You would like, I think, if I understand you rightly, to make me victorious, to rehabilitate me. But why should you? The person who will again be seen in the rue Oudinot must not be Monica, the foundling, but Monica, your nephew's *fiancée*, Monica, your niece. If you knew how I desire to have a true place of my own in the world, a true, acknowledged place! This is not pride. It is not a question of pride with me, but I have suffered too much from not being as others are. I cannot bear this again, not even for a short time, not even in your house."

"Perhaps you are right," Franquetot said, after having, in his turn, remained silent for a few minutes; and, with a sigh that pierced the girl's heart: "Good-by, Monica," he said; "good-by, Michel. If I could have had you near me always, I could have been happy in

growing old. Perhaps I might not have died without doing what I have here in my brain;" and he smote his forehead with the gesture that legend attributes so often to the great artist who fails of success. "What am I talking about? I will be happy, my children, since you are, and since I have had some share in making you so. You say you will come to-morrow, Monica, or the day after? Try to come to-morrow; and, you know, you must not buy any furniture for your lodgings. I shall give it to you. I shall carve it for you with my own hands. This shall be your dowry."

Now, you can understand why the door between the atelier of the furniture and that of the tapestry was always open when, last year, you went to see this excellent Franquetot, and why, now, it is always closed, since Monica is gone. You know now why the old man has grown so gray in these past months and the cause of his taciturn moods. Notwithstanding what he said, he is not happy. To think of his adopted daughter's happiness is not enough. He would like to have her there, as formerly, and Michel, his disciple, there, also. And yet art, that supreme consoler for the failures of all our dreams, has its pacifying effect upon the old sculptor, and he has, even in his melancholy, some very sweet hours. These are when he works, alone and secretly, when the atelier is vacant, at a *chaise-longue* in three parts, of his own designing, which he

intends for Monica. He forgets, as he uses his tools with all the delicacy of which he is capable, his daughter, toward whom in the depths of his heart he still has a feeling of bitterness, and his wife, whose coarse nature makes him suffer more than he will confess to himself, and his disappointment as to his nephew, and the other wrongs that fate has done him: the death of the persecuted Riesener, the suppressions of the guilds, the destruction of the Boulle furniture, in 1720, — in fact, all his griefs, real and imaginary. He retains them, however, in the depths of his heart, both the ancient and the new; the latter are the more cruel, for they have stamped themselves upon his face, once so gay, in signs that his workmen cannot fail to observe. They talk of this often, when the *patron* is not present; and, the other day, when one of the most faithful customers of the place — he, in fact, from whom the author of this story has its details — was about to enter, he overheard the following dialogue. It is given here, in all its simplicity, because it contains in a rather picturesque form, though savouring of the shop, the philosophy, not of this narrative only, but of many others:

"At least la Monica ought to come here oftener," said the ill-disposed Espitalier. "The *patron* would be more cheerful. I say, as I always have said, she will not die of having too much heart."

"But you must recollect there's a baby," Avron replied. "He is not six weeks old yet."

"I don't agree with Espitalier, for my part," said Chassaing. "It is not la Monica who is bad-hearted, but Michel. He thinks himself quite above all of us, Franquetot included. He does not like to have his wife come here too much."

"We shall never know, now, what happened between la Monica and la Gote," resumed Espitalier. "And the mother, too! I can never get it out of my head that that fracas about the bonds that disappeared had something to do with that story!"

"And to think you have been with us twenty years, and it has taught you nothing!" interrupted Jolibois, the Admiral, the dean of the workshop. "What kind of wood do you call this?" he continued, showing to Espitalier, who worked at the same bench, the leg of an arm-chair which he was occupied in repairing. "Have you any idea what it is? Tell us."

"It is walnut. What nonsense!" said Espitalier.

"And this?" Jolibois asked, indicating another piece.

"That's whitewood. You old rascal!"

"Well then," insisted the other, "have you ever seen anybody make a piece of furniture partly of this handsome black walnut, so well-veined and solid, and partly of this whitewood, which is not worth a quid? No, you never did? But that is what Franquetot tried to do. He thought he could make a family with a Monica and a Gote. La Monica is the walnut, a fine wood, pretty, a wood for art and display; the other one is the

whitewood. Do you see now why his plan did not succeed? We each of us have some kind of wood that we are like. You think not? Your wood, Espitalier, is the pitch-pine, a wood that strains and warps; Avron, Chassaing, and I, we are ash or cherry, something meagre, hard, not very handsome, but good to wear all the same. Franquetot, he is heart of oak. You may laugh, but think it over, and you will see that I am right. And then," he added, shaking his head, — the old workman half joking, half misanthropic, — "whatever wood we are, we are cut and sawn and planed and, in the end of everything, eaten by worms, like this armchair. There is this difference, however, that with care a piece of furniture can be set up again, no matter how bad it is; while a man too much broken — you may set him on his feet, but it's no use; he can't stand. And sometimes I am afraid Franquetot has been too much broken. It's nobody's fault. It was Life that did it, the old bungler!"

January–February, 1901.

II

ATTITUDES

ATTITUDES

I

When Madame Izelin had glanced at the card which the concierge of the hotel handed her, together with her letters, and had read thereon the name of Lucien Salvan, her usually thoughtful and reserved face, of a woman of forty-five, expressed a surprise almost violent enough to be called a shock; and she at once slipped the card into the guide-book that she held in her hand, fearing lest her daughter Jeanne, who had lingered to select some flowers outside the door, might question her. But even when the latter appeared, bringing a handful of fresh primroses, those fresh Neapolitan primroses with which the sellers of bouquets besiege one's carriage-door in Naples, — and beautifully did they harmonize with her blond grace, — the mother had not yet entirely recovered her composure, and the girl asked: —

"But what is the matter, mamma? Have you had bad news?"

"I have not even looked at my letters," Madame Izelin said, forcing a smile, while Jeanne resumed, with solicitude in her voice and an anxiety in her blue eyes which seemed to reveal the most exalted affection: —

"If you're not well, let us get back to Paris as soon as possible, and give up Rome and Florence. Do not think of me. Think of yourself. Your health is my very life to me. I love art passionately, but I love you more than I do Michelangelo or Raphael."

"I am perfectly well," the mother replied, with a kind of vexation, as if the daughter's tone in the inquiry about her health — a tone so affectionate it seemed — had displeased her. "*Tiens!* here is a letter from your cousin Julie," she continued, after having looked at the different addresses. And while Jeanne took the envelope and tore it open with a joyous curiosity now upon her expressive face, the mother continued to examine her closely with a singular look, and held tight in her hand the book containing the visiting card which had so deeply agitated her.

They had entered the lift, which was now slowly ascending toward the fourth floor, where they had their rooms. The young girl kept on reading her letter, interrupting it by commentaries addressed to her companion: —

"They have had a grand ball at the Le Prieux', mamma; Julie writes that it was very amusing. There is talk of Edgard Faucherot's marriage to Jacqueline

Lounet. They are going to wear *boleros* very short this season, it seems. What luck for me — with my figure!"

"No," the mother said, five minutes later, when, alone in her room, she was again free to give herself up to the thoughts that the sight of the name engraved upon the card had awakened in her, "it is not possible that she has anything to do with this young man's coming here. All her letters pass through my hands. Besides, does she care for him? Does she care for anything but herself, and to produce an effect? Just now she had the air of being concerned about my health. If any one had seen her, in the hall, asking me, with those eyes, with that voice, 'Is anything the matter with you, mamma?' he would have believed that she was anxious, that she loved me. 'Do not think of me!' she said, speaking of Rome and Florence; and she spoke of Michelangelo and Raphael! She, who looks at nothing and feels nothing!"

Then, continuing her inward monologue: "Is it her fault? And have I the right to be vexed with her when I know so well that she inherits this frightful fault, this lack of truth, this eternal playing a part? And am I just? It is her way of feeling. Alas! I have seen too often, with her father, what it all leads to, — this taste for attitude and effect, — to what egoism, to what falsehood! I did not see it when I married him, any more than this unlucky young man sees the character of Jeanne! How he loves her — that he

could not endure our departure! If he knew that she has not spoken of him once, that she has not given him a moment's thought! It must be of his own accord that he came, that he discovered where we were! How he loves her! The poor lad!"

She had taken out the card from the guide-book, as she sat reflecting thus, and spelled out with her eyes the name of the young man on whose account she had hurriedly, five weeks before, carried her daughter off from Paris, first to Sicily and then to Naples, impelled by impressions and scruples which made part of the deep history of her life. What this life had been, and through how many sad hours it had passed, the premature gray of her hair, the prematurely wrinkled eyelids plainly told. She must have been pretty, very differently from her daughter, with something modest, timid, retiring, in her appearance. Her features, bearing the impress of age, remained extremely delicate. She still had beautiful teeth, beautiful eyes that were very soft, which sometimes, — too rarely, — when she smiled frankly, lighted up with a youthful, and almost childish, splendour. The half-mourning, which she had not laid aside, after two years of widowhood, made her colouring look like ivory. Her figure remained slender and lithe; and, though she had not a drop of noble blood in her veins, — her father, whose very plebeian name was Dupuis, had made his fortune as a wholesale dealer in wood at Bercy, — her feet and hands

would have caused envy to more than one authentic duchess. With this she also had, as it were diffused over all her person, that indefinable melancholy of women who have never been loved.

If her daughter, at that moment occupied in the next room in arranging her flowers in her vases, while going over in a half-voice a Neapolitan song, destined to be endlessly repeated, with piano accompaniment, in Paris, had opened the door a crack, and studied, in the verity of her expression, this mother whom she affected to love so much, possibly a true emotion might for once have seized her, on seeing how much this face, habitually so fatigued, had grown sadder still while she turned over and over in her slender fingers the supple oblong of pasteboard.

The splendid landscape visible through the window — that Bay of Naples with its soft curves, the purity of its sky and water, the graceful sweep of its volcano, its bright-coloured cities along its luminous shore, its sails so white upon its sea so blue — gave to this face of an anxious woman a setting which still further increased its pathetic expression. At last, and as if awaking from a very sad dream, the widow passed her hand over her eyes; she sighed heavily, and looked at the clock. It was now quarter to twelve. Breakfast would be served at half-past twelve. She unlocked a drawer and took out her writing-case, wherein lay a letter already partly written, very long, and evidently taken up from

time to time; she re-read it, now and then shaking her head, as with a feeling of the uselessness of what she had written; and, after assuring herself that her daughter, now also herself seated at a table in the adjacent room and about to write up the journal of her so-called "impressions of travel," would probably not interrupt her, she returned to go on with this letter, written to the only one of her friends to whom she gave her complete confidence. These pages will explain, better than any commentary, both the nature of the relations between this woman and this girl, and the singular moral tragedy of her own life in which the presence of Lucien Salvan at Naples and his call at the hotel made a novel and decisive episode.

NAPLES, March 17, 1897.

Your reproaches, my dear friend, on the subject of my long silence touch me. To have the heart's second sight, as you have it toward me, your friendship for me must be very strong — strong even to the extent of being a little unjust. But it is a sweet injustice. One has need sometimes to feel one's self loved too much, loved with a sensitiveness unknown to lukewarm affections. You know whether I have been over-indulged in this regard. Know also, know always, that I appreciate your sympathy as it deserves. Fortunate as you are in your husband, your children, your grandchildren, that you should have been interested, as you have been, in a solitary woman, who was but an acquaintance,

is the proof of a tender-heartedness for which it would be inhuman in me to be ungrateful.

I am not so, be assured; and if I left Paris without seeing you, without talking over with you the plan of this journey about which you express anxiety, it was because certain griefs are shy in their nature, even toward — especially toward — friends whose esteem one would carefully avoid alienating from other persons. You understand from these few words that my poor Jeanne is concerned in this resolution which I suddenly formed of leaving home for an absence of some weeks, perhaps months. But do not hastily suppose that the child has done anything deserving of blame. There are moments when I ask myself if it is not I who am in fault, and whether I have truly fulfilled toward her, in this affair, a mother's duty. But could I better respond to your tender solicitude, dear friend, than by making you yourself the judge of the troubles through which I have passed, of the reflections resulting from them, and of the method by which I have escaped from a difficulty which, whatever its cause may have been, is now so probably a thing of the past that what I write you is merely retrospective history. Still, I intend to relate it to you, though at the risk of repeating things in regard to which I have often talked with you before. Do not expect anything extraordinary. Who is it that says, "Dramas of the heart have no events"?

We have so often spoken of my daughter that I do

not need to tell you that my difficulty again arises from the peculiarity of my relations with her. Permit me to recall them to you, so that the whole may be clear and definite in your mind. To do this will be a solace, while it also will cause me pain.

You knew her father, and you know what the martyrdom of my life with him was. God forbid that I should ever confuse a child, all inexperience, all simplicity, with a man so deeply, so thoroughly corrupt. That Monsieur Izelin married me solely for my fortune; that he never had in his heart the shadow of a shade of affection for me, while I, on my part, gave myself to him with a passion of which this day's lament — after so many years, after death — is still a proof; that he betrayed me, exploited, humiliated, crushed me — I should be guilty indeed if I felt ill-will toward his daughter on this account, and threw upon her the responsibility for a resemblance which is no fault of hers! That she has his eyes, his hair, his colouring, his gestures, his voice — that I find again in her, under a feminine form, that grace of trait and manner by which I was so foolishly caught — would be only a reason for loving her better — in memory of my past illusions! But the resemblance, as I have often said to you, goes much farther. I have also explained to you how the misery of my married life was less in the actions which made me their victim than in the states of feeling that they manifested. Monsieur Izelin might have been

even more faithless and more brutal than he was, I should have been less unhappy had he not kept, through all his faults, that faculty of simulation which deceived so many people, as it had deceived me when I was very young; which, at first, deceived even yourself, the acutest mind, the best endowed with discernment that I know. You remember, too, how this man, so selfish and hard, always had the right words to say, the right attitude to assume, in relation to whatever came up; how he excelled in the impersonation of scrupulousness! If a story of villany were related in his presence, how he grew indignant; or some noble act, how he admired it! If the talk was of a book, a picture, a play, how fine and pure his taste appeared! If a character were discussed, how he was indulgent or severe, with an equity which gave those who heard him the idea of a conscience so lofty, so wise! This simulation was of all my miseries the worst. It was from a horror of this false show that I formed that habit of reserve with which you have sometimes reproached me, that difficulty in giving expression to my own feelings, that aversion from every manifested emotion, which you have at times regarded as coldness. I had suffered too much from that duality of my husband not to mistrust, everywhere and always, that which once you called — using a word that I have not forgotten — attitudes of the soul. One can assume them so often, so gracefully, so appropriately, and feel so little!

It was only late in his life that you met Monsieur Izelin, at a time when this gift of conceiving and expressing refined feelings, without experiencing them at all, had become a frightful, a criminal hypocrisy, serving to hide under a noble exterior a frightful degradation of character. It had not always been so. Even in the earliest days of our married life, while he was for me an absolutely blameless husband, I began to notice this complete, radical divorce in him between feeling and expression, this instinct for pose, which made him involuntarily, without effort, by a sort of irresistible histrionic inclination, assume a certain character for the purpose of producing a desired effect. Before being an actor with an end to gain, he was an actor for the mere pleasure of it. And why? In describing to you, yet again, this character, of which I made, to my cost, so prolonged a study, I am still incapable of answering this question. Is there, in some natures, an inner aridness which incapacitates them for any deep, simple, genuine emotion, and with it an imaginative power which makes them believe that they feel, and so they trick themselves first, and, later, others? And then, do these insincere, complicated natures let themselves be carried away by the desire to please, or by vanity, or by self-interest, to increase this original fault? They were factitious; they become false. They are nothing but perfidy and calculation; but they began by being almost spontaneous

in their insincerity. This passage from artifice to falsehood is my husband's whole moral history. And all my history — mine with my daughter — is, since I first observed in her, as a child, touches of character so like her father's, a terror lest the resemblance become complete. For any other mother than I, this facility of Jeanne's in transforming herself at the will of the persons she desires to please, this knowing what words to use, what manner to assume, while yet she feels nothing at all of what she expresses, this gift of *attitudes*, which contrasts so much, when one knows her well, with her interior indifference; for any other person than myself these would be only a young girl's queer ways, sure to pass off as she grew older.

I have too carefully watched these tendencies not to be aware that they do but grow with her; and her father's destiny is too constantly present to my mind for me to accept carelessly what I believe, what I know, to be an actual malformation of soul. I have so striven against this, since first I perceived it in her, and always in vain! I have so endeavoured to break up this spontaneous lying, to hinder the child's playing to herself the part of emotions that she does not feel! I have so laboured to render her simple and sincere; and I have so felt that there was, in the inmost structure of her being, an innate element, a something primitive and indestructible, that she is born an actress as you and I are born sincere, perhaps because, — I,

her mother, shudder to write it, — perhaps because she has no heart, and never will have one.

I have gone on talking to you thus, at such length, as if I had not confessed these miseries to you many a time before. Pardon me, and see in this a sign that I am greatly agitated at this moment and the depths of my memory are stirred. And, then, to repeat to you all these things is to plead for myself, in advance, in the affair I am about to relate to you, and of which this journey into Italy is the episode. I have said "the affair," but the word will seem to you too serious when you discover to what it is applied. Nor will you any better understand, at first, why I did not tell you of my solicitude when it first began, and why I do tell you of it now. The truth is, I hesitated long before yielding to it myself; and, then, I had seen you but little this winter since you were in mourning, and I am laying mine aside while Jeanne is entering society this year. You will remember that I always dreaded this period in her life? With the character that I believe I see in her, everything for her, more than for any other girl, depends upon her marriage; and a marriage depends so often on this first year in society — the impression a young girl produces, and the young men whom she meets.

Will you be surprised when I tell you that she has had much success and also has shown much tact and manner? — too much for my taste. She, toward whom

her father was so harsh, and who mourned so little for him, — you remember how I suffered from that, in spite of everything? — she has carried into all her gayeties that reserved air of a daughter who, left alone with a widowed mother, lives upon a footing of concealed sadness. You know how I feared she might imitate her cousins, who are good girls, but with that detestable tone of the flighty young woman of the present day. On the contrary, Jeanne has made it her affair not to be like them. She, who since she began to think at all, has never taken an interest in anything but the bits of Parisian life that by chance came within her reach; she has found out, through this genius for simulation that is in her, that the secret of success is to appear as serious, as old-fashioned, as the others are lively and "new-century," to use their own expression. You will say that I am hard to please, and that causes are of no consequence, provided the result is good. Granted that a young girl has this dignity from vanity — the principal thing is, that she have it.

And, indeed, I should have reasoned thus myself if this little scheme of Jeanne's had not resulted in awakening the most passionate interest in the young man whom I would least wish to see her marry, from a reason which is precisely the subject of my scruples, and of which you alone, my dear friend and devoted confidant, will understand the origin and the nature.

This young man, whom you do not know, but whose

name you have certainly heard, on account of his father, is M. Lucien Salvan. He is the son of Dr. Salvan, the specialist in nervous diseases. This means, as you see, of course, that he will one day be rich, and also that his family belong to that position in life in which it is my ardent wish that Jeanne should remain. I have too fully experienced, in her father's case, how wise is the old custom of marrying in one's own station, with absolute equality as to fortune and birth. If Monsieur Izelin had not been the son of a woman of noble family, who had felt herself deprived of her social position by her marriage with a plebeian, he might not have had that lack of balance which was increased by his marriage with me — he, the half-artist, very close to the aristocracy, I, the daughter of a man in trade, very close to the people. As regards social conditions, therefore, Monsieur Salvan would correspond perfectly to all that I desire. With this, without being noticeably handsome, he is a man of very good presence. He has a pleasant face and agreeable manners. He has the reputation of being a worker, and has just passed his legal examinations brilliantly. His father and his mother — he resembles the latter especially, whom you would like — leave him free as to his career, and there can be no doubt that he will succeed in whatever one he may choose. This is the portrait of an ideal son-in-law, is it not? And because it is so, I ask myself if, in ardently desiring that this marriage shall not

take place, I have not been seriously unfaithful toward my daughter. Do not think I have lost my reason; have patience to read to the end.

I had not much difficulty, as you will easily suppose, in discovering that this young man was interested in Jeanne. The lover's tricks are always the same. No sooner had this one been presented to us than he began, as being the correct thing, to be as devoted to me as he was to her. This is classic. It is equally so that I strove to profit by his assiduities to study his character. The trait which struck me at once, no doubt because I recognized in it a close and singular resemblance to myself, was this difficulty of expression, this kind of shyness which feeling only increased, this reserve under the eye of others, this sensitiveness, all the more intimidated the more it is intense, manifesting itself so much the less the more it is touched.

I have said to you that Lucien Salvan resembles his mother. He has her refined and distinguished manner, with a firmness of will that reminds one of his father. But the mother predominates, and one divines by all sorts of little tokens that this son of a woman so distinguished feels, at every moment, in the contact of life, impressions that most men never suspect — that a brutality of thought or of words hurts him as it hurts us, you and me, that he is the victim of profound sympathies or antipathies on the most casual encounters. In short, he is one of those beings for whom one can-

not help having, in advance, a certain pity, so much does one feel them exposed to suffer, if they are unfortunate. Do not imagine from this sketch one of those heroes of romance, of melancholy and effeminate aspect, who, at a tea-table or in a ball-room, assume the aspect of the misunderstood. The great charm of this young fellow is that he is absolutely, radically unaffected. He has no idea how different he is from the other young men of his age. He has lived at home, up to this time, without suspecting that he was an exception. It is not the first time that I have remarked this, that sensibilities truly deep are not those which revolt against their surroundings; they are those which accept their environment, which submit to the monotony of habits, and take pleasure in discipline and patience. Lucien was the most regular of schoolboys, the most exemplary of students, and his is the most passionate heart I have ever met, the most likely, if once it be given, to remain faithful forever, and if his choice is not what it ought to be, to suffer from this the very agony of death.

How, when, as a result of what, did I find myself recalling, in the presence of the dawning affection of this charming fellow for Jeanne, the dawning of my own affection for him who was the torturer of my youth, the destroyer of all the hopes of my life? It was due to the fact that to the astonishing resemblance, which had so often caused me anxiety, between my daughter's character and that of her father, corresponds

a resemblance, not less marvellous, between the character of this young man and that which was my own character in that blind period of my youth.

And there has grown within me a vision, if this marriage should ever take place, of an identity in our fates. I have seen him discovering, by degrees, as I discovered it, the radical, irremediable falsity of the heart to which he has given his own. I have pictured him reaching, one by one, the stages of disillusion, through which once I passed, and Jeanne developing, as her father did — from indifferent becoming hard, from artificial becoming false, from the simulator becoming the hyprocrite, — from the vain girl becoming the coquettish woman, *and my destiny repeating itself.* When this idea first occurred to me, I banished it with all the force my reason possessed, saying to myself that I had no right to think thus of my daughter, that the circumstances which determined the moral decadence of her father would not be reproduced in her case; that, on the contrary, if there were a chance of safety for this nature so factitious and so cold-hearted, it was in the union with a sensibility like his. But it was in vain. No less vainly did I demonstrate to myself that it was my duty, between the two, to side with my daughter, and to establish her in the most favourable conditions.

But these discussions with myself are of no importance. They were ended one day, I cannot even now

say why, by a violent, passionate, irresistible desire to cut short the intimacy which I saw increasing between Jeanne and Lucien; by an impossibility of allowing this marriage without insupportable remorse; and by this abrupt departure, of which I can now say that, at one point at least, it was very wise. I have had the proof that Jeanne is not at all interested in him, for I have not seen her sad for a moment since this separation. And, as regards him, I have had the proof that I exaggerated the danger, since he has neither made, nor caused to be made, any movement which showed a desire to recall himself to our minds.

March 18.

I stopped writing last evening, my dear friend, intending to finish my letter this morning with some few details, of a more commonplace order, as to the result of our plans of travel. Perhaps you may detect by my handwriting that I resume it at a moment of extreme emotion. I said to you that Monsieur Salvan had done nothing to recall himself to our minds; and I concluded from this that the dawning interest which had so much terrified me had yielded to absence. *Eh bien!* he has followed us. He is in Naples. This morning I have just received his card. This afternoon, this evening, to-morrow, he will see Jeanne again. Jeanne will see him. Dear friend, I implore you, write to me; tell me which way it seems to you that my duty lies, as woman and mother.

If you think that I have been the victim of an unreasonable scruple, in considering myself obliged to do all that is possible to prevent this marriage, which I believe must be disastrous for a man who, after all, is to me a stranger, your conscience will tranquillize mine. I am extremely disturbed by the certainty which I now feel that this young man loves my daughter.

How I wish you were with me; how much you are needed by your friend, who embraces you most tenderly!

MATHILDE IZELIN.

II

WHILE Madame Izelin, having closed her letter and sent it off, was asking herself whether or not she should mention to her daughter the visit of the young man whose presence in Naples she regretted for the complex reasons which have been summed up in these pages, he himself was no less disturbed, but from causes of an order much more simple. The mother had made no mistake; Lucien Salvan was in love with Jeanne. The few weeks, which had followed the departure of the young girl, had been all the more insupportable to him, because he had not for a moment deceived himself as to the secret intention of this sudden journey. Madame Izelin desired in this way to interrupt a courtship so discreet that she had perhaps alone been aware of it. But that she had been aware of it the

young man was certain. He could explain on no other supposition the change which he had noticed in her manner toward himself. After having shown a cordiality of welcome which had seemed to his hopes almost a permission to approach her daughter, he had suddenly become aware that coldness had taken the place of friendliness.

He had said to himself, "I have made some mistake, but in what?" The most scrupulous self-examination furnished him no reply. At twenty-five years of age, and though brought up in Paris, Lucien had retained — Madame Izelin was correct in her opinion — that feminine sensitiveness which reacts in suffering, from the least rough touch, instead of reacting in resistance. Beings thus made have need, for their hearts to open freely, of a complicity of good will around them. Hostility makes them shut themselves in; but, at the same time, stimulates and develops still more that energy of the soul's dream which is their constant temptation and their danger. No longer daring to manifest to Jeanne so openly the interest that he felt, Lucien gave himself up more to the lovely and chimerical idea that he formed of her for himself. Now that she was gone, and he could no longer ask himself each day when and how he could see her, his imaginative passion grew more and more intense. By force of turning over and over in his mind all possible data of the problem, he had arrived at this twofold convic-

tion: first, that some one had cut the ground from under his feet with Madame Izelin — but who was it? — and, second, that the mother had planned some other marriage for her daughter. A name which he chanced to hear mentioned in the course of a conversation, that of a Monsieur de Barrois, the only young man of rank who frequented the society in which he had met Madame and Mademoiselle Izelin, had confirmed this suspicion in his mind. Four short sentences, thrown out at random, had sufficed to establish this mental certainty: "We don't see Monsieur de Barrois now." — "We shall see him again after Mademoiselle Izelin returns." — "Oh! is that what you think?" — "I think he is very fond of her, and that Mathilde would be quite willing to have her daughter a marquise. Imagine it, my dear!" These few words; the recollection, on the one hand, suddenly reawakened, of a ball where Jeanne had danced several times with Monsieur de Barrois, and the recollection, on the other hand, of a certain look she had in speaking to himself; the feeling, in spite of all, of that first friendliness he had been conscious of in Madame Izelin — is there need of anything more to explain why, being at liberty to take a journey, and having first spent a week on the Riviera, another project, alike simple and romantic, had sprung up in his mind? He knew, from other conversations, that Jeanne and her mother had gone away with the intention of visiting Naples and Sicily, and coming up to Rome for Holy

Week. He considered it probable that they would begin their journey at the most southern point, and accordingly, three days before his visit to the hotel, he had arrived in Naples.

What should he now do? He did not know, nor even whether he should find those whom he sought; and when he had discovered after some hours of search that they were in a hotel on the Chiaja, very near his own, the rashness of his enterprise suddenly became apparent to him. For two days he had kept watch upon the movements of Madame Izelin and her daughter, concealed, like an evil-doer, in a corner from which he could see the door of this hotel, asking himself whether he should go openly and inquire for Madame Izelin or should present himself before them, as if by accident, in the street. Who has not known — who does not wish them back — those foolish uncertainties of love in its young days, when the reason tries to give a good account of that which is only the blind and tender instinct of the heart, starving for presence and sick with absence!

What Lucien Salvan wished most of all was to show Madame Izelin the reality of his feeling. He wanted to say to her, "Do not sacrifice me without giving me a hearing." How would he set about formulating this appeal? He did not know, any more than he knew whether that look of Jeanne's, which seemed to him the index of an emotion like his own, was anything

else than childish pride at having pleased him so much. He had never dared to declare himself, and in the resolution of making this mad journey there lay, deeper still, the need to put matters to the test. If he found the young girl saddened by their separation, it would be that she loved him. He had not been able to judge of her mood in seeing her pass, which had happened to him twice in those two days — with what emotion! He had seen the elegant figure, the lithe step, the complexion like a flower, the blond hair. But he could not discern the expression of the features or of the eyes. Nor had he been able to judge the mother's face closely, only it appeared to him she was a little paler.

Finally he had become ashamed of his hesitations, and also a little afraid lest these ladies might leave the city without his having even spoken to them; and he had presented himself at their hotel that morning at eleven o'clock, with the idea that they would probably not be at home; but he would leave his card for them, and they would thus know of his presence. He happened upon a concierge, luckily, who was disposed to talk, and in reply to the question, "When should I be most likely to find Madame Izelin at home?" readily replied: —

"After breakfast, usually; but not to-day. These ladies are going to Pompeii at two o'clock."

Upon this the lover had left the hotel, and, as soon

as he reached the sidewalk, had hailed a cab and had himself driven full speed to the railway station. A train would leave for Torre Annunziata a little before twelve. He had taken it; and while Madame Izelin, now seated at the breakfast table, continued to ask herself whether or not she should speak to her daughter of Lucien's visit, and how she herself should receive the young man, he had arrived at Pompeii. This had been done so impulsively, the conception and execution of the plan had been so closely mingled, that as he crossed the threshold of the dead city where he proposed to await Madame Izelin and her daughter, Salvan had a feeling that all this must be a dream. In less than twice thirty-five minutes, if he had been correctly informed, the two ladies would arrive by the same railway.

"They will know that I am in Naples. There will be nothing surprising in their meeting me here. I shall not seem to be looking for them. It will be equally natural that I should join them in their visit and that I should take the same train to return. And what a place in which to see Jeanne!"

While the lover thus reflected, he had walked in as far as the archway of the Porta Marina, and he had now before his eyes that apparition unique in the whole world, that phantom-like apparition of the city smitten in the midst of its holiday, that Pompeii buried under ashes eighteen hundred years ago. He began to go

along through the streets where the small gray houses, roofless and doorless, rear their walls, still covered in places with coloured stucco, and reveal the secret of the activities or the leisures of former times. There are shops, the counters hollowed into holes, with the jars all ready for the oil or wine; there are inner court-yards with colonnades; a fountain basin in which the jet of water no longer tinkles; walls whose frescos are half effaced. Elsewhere the hearth of a kitchen chimney still keeps its tripods and caldrons. Farther on, an empty well shows its curb worn by the hands that leaned upon it. There is a certain wall along which is tangled a leaden network of water-pipes, supported, as they are with us, by rings of metal soldered at regular intervals. The chariot wheels have worn deep ruts in the paving-stones of the street, and the high sidewalks seem still to await the foot-passenger who took refuge there to avoid the vehicles. Peristyles of temples remain in courts surrounded by porticos. Statues once adorned these courts; their great brick pedestals are yet standing; and everywhere, at the end of these streets, are the noble outlines of mountains — the Apennines, the hills of Castellamare; and in the bay the sea sparkles with its islands. The marvellous sagacity that the ancients employed in selecting the sites of their cities is revealed, and that need they had of the caress of extensive views. The pagan animal lived so much in the open air! So many pleasures were en-

joyed in the open forum, the open theatre, the open amphitheatre! The landscape had its share in all that he did; and at Pompeii the grace of this landscape became formidable when he who walked in the street, looking over his shoulder, perceived behind him the assassin of this merry city — the ominous volcano. This dangerous, beautiful Vesuvius dominates this enormous heap of ruins with its broad-based, graceful triangle of dark, velvety slopes; and on its summit the plume of smoke sways in the wind, white, yet now and then reddened by the reflection of the subterranean flame. The impression of the terrible destructive agencies of nature, thus lying close by the tokens of that human life so like our own, would fill the whole being with inexpressible alarm, were it not that the vast silence of the necropolis wraps us in a kind of peacefulness that is almost luxurious. It is the shudder in presence of the gloomy abyss of the tomb; and it is the charm of its long sleep. It is the stage-setting of a tragedy; and it is, with the profound azure of this sky and the radiance of this sunshine, a vision of beauty so tranquillizing! It seems as if the advice of the poets who were contemporaries of these vacant houses, these ruined temples, these obliterated paintings, were still whispered in the surrounding atmosphere — that advice to be happy while remembering always that this happiness will pass away, to mingle with the most intoxicating savours of life the bitter taste of death.

It is the silver skeleton that Trimalchio's slave brings into the *triclinium* of a villa, doubtless exactly resembling this one of the Faunus or of the Vettii, while the rose-crowned guests repeat the Epicurean song: "We shall all be like this when Orcus has grasped us. Let us live, then, while it is permitted us to love!"

The special turn of his mind would have, at any time, disposed Lucien Salvan to receive very keen sensations from this strange Pompeian *décor*. To this, occasion added that indescribable, penetrating emotion which seizes us when the drama of our own personal destiny touches at some point a grand historic drama, and our individual happiness or unhappiness becomes a minute episode in an immense epic. It had been decreed that the tremendous eruption which terrified the ancient world should occur, that the ashes and scoriæ should be heaped up sixteen feet deep upon this gay city, that the kings of Naples and then the kings of Italy should have worked a century and a half at clearing up this colossal cemetery, in order that these remains of the ancient Greek colony might serve as a romantic scene for the meeting of the young man and the girl whom it was his dream to make his wife.

The interview promised to be decisive; of this Lucien was well aware. Either Madame Izelin would have told her daughter that he was in Naples, and the young girl's way of receiving this news would be to him a sure sign of her feelings toward him; or Jeanne

remained unaware of his presence, and if he could study her face before she saw him he would know what effect this separation of several weeks had had upon her. If he found her evidently sad, grown pale, with the traces of suffering like those which he could read in his own face in the glass, then — then, it would be that she loved him!

As the moments passed, the most contradictory hypotheses in regard to this very near arrival of the two ladies were sketched out in Lucien's imagination. He finally selected, just upon the hour for the train's arrival, a post of observation where he would be sure to see them, and with every chance in favour of not being seen by them. He took shelter, armed with his lorgnette, at the corner of the wall which separates the temple of Apollo from the via Marina, a very short distance from the sole entrance to the ruins. A few steps distant, on the opposite side of the street, was the enclosure of the Basilica, which it was almost certain would be the first place visited; thence they would come to this temple of Apollo, while he would have time to make his escape before they arrived, and would then await them in the Forum, which they would take next in order. And so he was there, seated on a step, looking no longer at the columns of the temple, with the beautiful acanthus leaves of their Corinthian capitals, nor at the blue sky in the spaces between them, nor at a Hermes still standing on his marble pedestal,

in the folds of whose mantle agile, green-headed lizards were darting about, nor at anything except that via Marina, where the wave of tourists brought by the train was beginning to spread itself. What if, at the last moment, Madame Izelin had changed her plan for the afternoon? What if, having received his card, she had left the city? What if— Suddenly Lucien's heart stood still. He had seen them. They came in, a little after the rest, conducted by one of the guardians. In the field of the little glass, which was not quite steady in his hand, Lucien had the mother's face and the daughter's, both animated at this instant by impressions which suddenly caused him pain in that deep and unrecognized spot in the soul where we take cognizance of the infinitely small things of life. Madame Izelin's, which at first seemed veiled by some sad thought, began to express, from her first steps into this amazing city, a shock of surprise, in which Lucien recognized his own recent feeling. Her eyes rested upon this scene, whose poetry was unexpected by her, with that kind of poignant interest which he had himself experienced. Her features grew eager with that sympathetic attention that he would have been so glad to see in the face of Jeanne, that he might at once have with her a kind of secret communion. Instead, the delicate face of the young girl, at the moment simply natural because she did not know herself observed, was lighted with the amused smile of a child whom

this poetry emanating from things does not reach at all. Lucien would have reproached himself with it, as with a crime, to wish that her face might bear some trace of sadness. And yet it was a blow to him to observe that, since leaving Paris, she had gained that air of health revealing the perfect development of a young organism which no painful emotion has disturbed. If she knew of his presence in Naples, evidently she was indifferent to it. If she did not know it, their separation was also to her a matter of indifference. Her brilliant, vivacious eyes regarded the ruins with a curiosity which had no other aim than to gratify the most innocent, but also the least romantic of whims. Jeanne held in her hand a small camera, and her one interest, during these first few minutes, was to find a good position for a snap-shot. Suddenly she stopped, and Lucien could see that she was "taking" first the Marina and then the door of the Basilica. It seemed to him — but was it not an effect of the imagination? — that the mother who looked on, also, at this child's play in which her daughter was employed, had around her mouth a half-smile of pity. Almost immediately the two disappeared behind the stone enclosure of the building, and Lucien himself walked toward the Forum.

"What is the change in her?" he was saying to himself. "She seems like another person to me. She does not know that I am here, and her journey dis-

tracts her. That is all. It is perfectly natural, and I am an egoist."

Thus he reasoned with himself, leaning against one of the enormous masses of masonry which served as bases, the whole length of the Forum, for colossal equestrian statues. An hour earlier, upon entering this place, over which dominates the grand temple consecrated to Jupiter, he had been, even amid the anxiety of his expectation, penetrated by that imposing something, the atmosphere of Roman grandeur which forever floats over the place where have been engraved the letters of the sacred formula of the S.P.Q.R. No son of the Latin land has ever looked at them but that the blood of his ancestors thrilled within him. A veil was now drawn for him over these monuments, over this blue sky, over this history. He had now only one thought in his mind: "She is changed. What has happened?"

During these weeks of absence, the image of Jeanne, which he had never seen in its reality even when present, had still further been modified in his heart, to the point of becoming absolutely different from the actual person. And then, in Paris, every time he had met the young girl she, seeing herself observed by him, had so naturally exercised for his benefit her talent for attitudes! She had, by instinct and with an infallibly sure coquetry, posed for him as a child all emotion, all sensibility! She had made, with such subtle divination

the soul-gestures which would fascinate him! Now, for the first time, he had surprised her unarmed, so to speak, just as she was by herself and unwatched; and for the first time, also, he had the intuition, faint as a presentiment, that he did not know this creature, even while believing himself so much in love with her. There were the same features, but there were no longer the same expressions. There was the same face, but not the same look. Lucien, however, had not time to analyze this vague, confused disappointment. Already the large, dark-blue straw hat trimmed with bluets and surmounted by a simple knot of crimson silk, which framed the delicate face of Jeanne, appeared at the end of the place, and her figure so slender in the travelling-dress of navy-blue serge, and her red parasol, matching the colour on her hat. At her side, always a little behind her, he recognized the mother's round hat with black and white trimming, her dress of steel-gray, her parasol also gray. In the difference of dress, even, the difference in character of the two was manifested: the one, always a little too brilliant and emphatic, the other, always a little too modest and reserved. But if, later, Lucien, as he remembered this arrival, was destined to make this observation, and to draw from it this conclusion, at the moment one single idea absorbed all others: if he wished to present himself to Madame Izelin, and accompany her and Jeanne in their walk through the ruins, he must decide, and at once. One

last attack of timidity, one last effort, and he was in their presence.

The mother had been the first to see him. The little nervous shock which she experienced — as the young man saluted her and, with the most pathetic awkwardness, stammered a few words expressive of surprise — found outward manifestation only in the slightly dulled tone of her voice in reply. As for Jeanne, a little colour came into her cheeks, and in her eyes there was that sudden brilliancy which announces, in a coquette, the only joy that she can feel — that of having there, in her presence, an evident proof of her power. It was but for a moment, and then that changeful face was stamped with the feeling that a young girl ought to have to whom a young man offers a proof of passionate devotion — a feeling equally remote from a coolness discouraging to the worshipper and from an emotion which would be an avowal or an encouragement. Lucien, meanwhile, was beginning, after the first sentences of commonplace politeness, to explain his journey in embarrassed language which quickly convicted him of deceit: —

"I have not been quite well," he said; "the winter, in Paris, became so severe after you left. My doctor recommended a milder climate. And I had never been in Italy. I yielded to the temptation. And I came as far as Naples. It was yesterday, in looking over the list of strangers in the reading-room of my hotel, that

I saw your name, madame. And I took the liberty of going to inquire for you this morning. You are quite well, madame, and also Mademoiselle Jeanne?"

"Quite well," replied the mother. The young man's timidity, the hesitating tone of his voice, the mute entreaty of his eyes, touched her. She saw in his face that he had really suffered; and for a moment pity got the better of her scruples. She added: "You must tell us all the news from Paris. If you have not finished your visit here, we will walk on together."

"I have only just come," Lucien said. To meet once more in Madame Izelin, whose coldness had so much disconcerted him, the cordiality of the very first days of their acquaintance, was so great a surprise that it brought the colour to his face, and he began walking along with the two ladies without any more recollection of his recent impression of disappointment than if Jeanne had presented herself to his first look just as she now was. By what magic power of second sight had this young actress perceived what was expected of her and what impersonation she must adopt to complete his fascination? Certain it is that her amused smile of the earlier moments had given place to pathetic surprise, and that her eyes wandered over the ruins with a discreet melancholy. She was no longer interested in "taking" the snap-shots which later should divert her young friends in Paris. She was in truth — with her refined blond beauty, the pretty, graceful slenderness

of her waist, of her throat, of her wrists and ankles — the lovely apparition that Lucien had dreamed of meeting: Youth, touched with a tender sadness in the midst of what represents one of the most poignant tragedies of history; Hope, amidst the relics of a destroyed civilization and itself gently saddened by the eternal menace of Fate, imprinted everywhere in this desolation. And she was careful not to ask, "what was going on in Paris," as her mother had suggested. Did there exist such a thing as society? Were there balls and all manner of gossip? The young girl seemed to have forgotten them completely. She moved on, contenting herself with the utterance of a few words, now and then, very vague, doubtless, and very easily said, but, from these girlish lips, extraordinarily significant to her lover.

"What strikes me," she said, pointing to those abandoned shops, those vacant baths, those empty courtyards, "is, how few new things there are in life! If a rain of ashes were to bury one of our cities, there would be nothing very different found from all this. It is a great commentary on the catechism's 'vanity of vanities.'"

"Do you not think," she said, later, as they sat down on one of the steps of the theatre, "that a tragedy played here, with only a few spectators, and all this vacant city outside, would have an extremely fine effect?" And she added: "The portions of these ruins, which are most impressive to me, are those which re-

call scenes of festivity. Very often, at the theatre, the idea comes over me that all of us, the audience and the actors alike, are under sentence of death, and I imagine the place empty, and everybody gone. It is this dream that is realized here, and we shudder at it."

"I should like so much to know," she questioned in front of the colonnade of the little temple of Isis, "whether there were Christians in Pompeii when this catastrophe occurred? If there were, they must have been the only ones who had a hope."

And in the Street of the Tombs, before the bas-relief of Nævoleia Tyche, which represents a vessel coming into port: "I was just saying, you know, that there was nothing new! What other comparison could we invent now to express the peace of heaven after the storms of earth?"

These words occurred to her so ingenuously, she appeared so fully to comprehend and to feel all the poetry of the dead city, that Lucien listened with an admiration which kept him from observing the absolutely conventional character of all these remarks: that they were so general, so commonplace, so stupid, in fact, ought to have shown him that this facile melancholy of the tourist expressed no direct personal feeling. But this mimicry of sentiment was accompanied with such a skilful play of lips and eyelids, Jeanne had such a clever trick of placing her reflections between two silences, as if she were thinking aloud! And the

lover, on his part, yielded to a hypnotism of credulity which would have risen to the height of rapture had he not again observed how the mother's face grew sombre. Madame Izelin, in fact, from the first words of this kind that her daughter had begun to speak, herself became silent. She now saw Lucien hanging upon this voice which she knew to be so false, and Jeanne improvising and carrying on a comedy the character of which the mother so well understood; and the suffering which she had come to Italy to escape, seized upon her anew with more force than ever. This had come to a point where to continue the walk was more than she could bear. It was halfway in this Street of Tombs, and in front of the bas-relief of the vessel on whose symbolic meaning Jeanne had just now commented, her eyes full of poetry. The evidence of pose in this child who was her daughter became too intolerable to her clearsightedness, and too intolerable the evidence of being its dupe, in this young man who himself really had, she felt, all the emotions which the other feigned to have. She said to them:—

"I am tired. I will sit here while you go on to the end of the street."

"But let us sit here with you, mamma," the girl said, with a solicitude that Madame Izelin repulsed almost harshly.

"No," she replied. "I prefer to be alone."

"Can you tell me if Madame Izelin is displeased in

any way?" Lucien ventured to ask his companion as soon as they had gone a few steps. "It almost seems as if she were not willing to see me here; and still, she was so kind to me at first!"

"It is not you she is displeased with," said the young girl, "it is I."

"You?" he asked. "But why?"

"Because I have ventured to talk a little," Jeanne answered, shaking her dainty head, "and you have seemed interested in what I was saying. Do not suppose, however, that she is severe toward me. No. But she has her ideas. How can I explain this to you? My poor father was so good to her. He accustomed her to take the first place always, don't you understand? It is only natural that she should not like giving it up, and to have any one seem to prefer me causes her pain. In short, will you pay a little more attention to her? And I beg of you, let us talk of something else."

This was said so well, in a tone half sad, half childish, that Lucien, the fastidious, did not even notice that in thus calling his attention to what she pretended was the mother's jealousy toward herself, the girl whom he hoped to make his wife was committing one of those petty moral parricides which he would have inexorably condemned in any other person. On the contrary, his feeling was one of sympathizing respect for the reserve of this child who left her complaint unfinished.

Could it be that this was truly the solution of the enigma which had barred his way so many times within these last few weeks, and that the admiration Jeanne inspired had excited in Madame Izelin that base and hateful envy of a younger woman's charm and beauty, always sad to see in a woman beginning to grow old, but almost monstrous between a mother and her daughter? In a heart so imaginative and passionate as that of Jeanne's lover, an idea like this must cause revolution.

It did, indeed, produce such an effect that, for the rest of the afternoon at Pompeii and during the return to Naples, it was now Madame Izelin's turn to be amazed at the change in him. Without a word being said on the subject and quite as a matter of course, the young man had left Pompeii with the two ladies and, no less naturally, entered the same railway carriage with them. Notwithstanding Jeanne's suggestion, he could not take upon himself the task of conversing with this mother in whose nature had suddenly been revealed to him such unworthy, such guilty, ways of feeling. Jeanne, on her part, — a little ashamed after all, in her conscience, at the calumny her insatiable need of playing a part had suggested to her without her fully measuring its scope, — was silent. The mother looked at the two with an intuition that, during the few minutes when she had so imprudently left them together, words of extreme importance had been spoken.

But what were they? The train went on, following this coast of black lava, bathed with a blue sea. The sublimity of the view, which ended with the luminous point of Sorrento, the sharp rock of Capri, the softly outlined mountains of Ischia and of Posilippo, did not appease this feminine sensitiveness which perhaps was not fully conscious of itself. At the moment when the train entered the station at Naples, the fever of her anxiety had so gained upon Madame Izelin that she could not endure the idea of undergoing longer the uncertainty into which she was again plunged. The necessity of a definite explanation with Lucien imposed itself upon her. Jeanne had stepped out first, and the young man stood back to give Madame Izelin room to pass. Then the mother, with an abrupt, imperative voice, in which he could detect the extreme disturbance from which she was suffering, said to him: —

"I wish to see you. Come to my hotel in the morning at half-past ten. But by no means let her" — and she indicated Jeanne by a glance — "know of it. I rely upon your honour for this."

III

The mental distress into which this interview, so strangely and abruptly appointed, had plunged Lucien Salvan had not abated when, at the designated hour,

he was ushered into the salon of Madame Izelin's little apartment at the hotel. Why had she made him come? What decision, fatal to his happiness, was she about to announce to him?

Before the conversation of the preceding day, while Jeanne had not as yet revealed to him her mother's jealous sensitiveness, this interview would not have been at all alarming to the young man. He would have taken the opportunity thus offered him to carry out the plan which had led him to make his irrational journey. He would have shown this woman, who certainly could not remain entirely indifferent to it, the sincerity of his feeling for her daughter. He felt himself silenced, since she cherished this strange and wicked envy, of which her daughter seemed to stand so much in fear. And, again, Lucien had said to himself that such an aberration was not in human nature, that he must have misunderstood what Jeanne had said to him, or, possibly, that she herself had been mistaken. His agitation was carried to its height by the manner in which this woman, to his mind so mysterious and upon whom depended the happiness or misery of his life, now received him.

She was seated near a window opening upon the vast picture of Vesuvius and the bay. With her whitening hair, her pallid face, the gray tonality of her dress, she gave so little the idea of a person who suffers from the homage offered to another. Everything in her face

revealed a supreme self-renunciation, a mortification of self, a soul whose desires are turned, solely and irrevocably, toward peace. Her eyes, especially, when they rested upon the young man, gave a convincing denial to the accusation that Jeanne had made. Their glance was so direct, so profound, so serious! There are expressions of eyes which cannot be reconciled with meanness of heart. It was evident that this interview was no less agitating to her than to the young man; her face revealed insomnia, and her hand slightly trembled. She made a sign to Lucien to be seated, and began speaking to him. In the course of her reflections during the night, she had bitterly reproached herself for having yielded hastily to the impulse of the moment. She had said to herself that she ought not to betray to a stranger the irremediable lack of sincerity of which she could not but be conscious in her daughter; that she might bring forward objections to a marriage between Lucien and Jeanne without alluding to the latter's character at all; and she had decided upon a plan which she now began to put in execution. She proposed to appeal to the young man's generosity, feeling quite sure that to touch this string would awaken an echo in his soul.

"I desired to speak with you, Monsieur Salvan," she said, "because I have a very sincere esteem for you. There are decisions which a mother has the right to make without giving to any one her reasons for doing

so. But I recognize in you a nature too noble, and too sensible also, to be willing to act toward you as I would toward another. I merely ask you to answer me first this question: Suppose that one of your friends from Paris had met us yesterday at Pompeii, yourself, my daughter, and me — what would he have thought?"

"But, madame," the young man said confusedly, "if I had supposed that my presence displeased you, I would have left you — you and Mademoiselle Jeanne — at once. It was by your own authorization."

"I was obliged to ask you to join us," the mother said, "and I do not regret doing so. It was my wish to see you with my daughter; I did see you with her. If I had had the least doubt on certain points, it would have been dispelled. Speak to me frankly, my child." At the moment when she was about to deal the blow, she could not resist giving him, in this affectionate appellation, a proof of her pity for the suffering she must inflict. "Yes," she insisted, "answer me. Do you believe that this friend from Paris, of whom I spoke, would have believed that we had met there by accident?"

"No, madame," he said simply.

"Be frank to the end," Madame Izelin continued, "and confess that your whole journey had but one thing in view: that you came to Naples because you desired to see Jeanne."

"I confess it," Lucien replied. He felt, while Madame Izelin spoke, that kind of dismayed confusion

which overcomes young men like him, modest in their feelings to the extent of shyness, when one of their most inner secrets is put into words in their presence. They were aware that this secret was known to the person talking with them, and still, the clear statement of it discomposes them as much as if they had felt themselves secure of absolute mystery. It will happen, then, that instead of trying to conceal a part, at least, of what they had resolved to keep secret, they feel a need of complete frankness, and, in their turn, speak words of which they would have believed themselves forever incapable. Jeanne's lover repeated, "I confess it;" and then went on, astonished, himself, at what he was daring to say: "I understand now that I did wrong, and that you might very easily have misjudged me. It will appear to you irrational, but it is perfectly true, I never for a moment thought of the possibility of being recognized by some person of our acquaintance — of my presence here being known, interpreted, commented upon. Since you understand me so well, you have also become aware what my feeling is toward Mademoiselle Jeanne. But I know too well that you have perceived it. I know that you left Paris on that account, because you thought me too devoted to her. Then I was most unhappy. I said to myself that some one had spoken ill of me to you. I believed this. I believed, also, that you had a plan for another marriage for Mademoiselle Jeanne.

A name had been mentioned in my hearing. I could not bear this uncertainty, and so I left home. It was my intention to remain in the south of France, to endeavour to ascertain the date of your return, and to meet you somewhere in the north of Italy. Then I thought that I might come to meet you as far as Florence; then I thought I might come to Rome. At last the temptation was too strong; and I am here. I have told the whole story, madame. If you order me to leave Naples, I shall obey you. But I beg you to believe me, there was no subterfuge on my part, and never for an instant did I dream that my journey could compromise Mademoiselle Izelin."

"She was not informed of your leaving home?" the mother asked.

"Ah! madame!" he replied, so excessively shocked he could scarcely conceal it.

"How he loves her!" thought Madame Izelin, at this new proof of the infinite delicacy of this heart of a young man; and she replied: "I believe you, Monsieur Salvan; and I am very grateful to you for having spoken with this entire sincerity. I will respond to it with an equal sincerity. It is very true," she added, after a moment's hesitation, "that I took my daughter away from Paris because of you. But do not reproach yourself. You have overstepped in no way in your attentions the limits that an honourable man should fix for himself where a young girl is concerned. Nor has any

person spoken ill of you to me. I should not have allowed it, having too carefully observed you not to have formed a definite judgment in regard to you. I have already told you that I esteem you highly — ah, yes! infinitely."

She said these last words with an emotion that she could hardly conceal; and this completed Lucien Salvan's mental confusion. This esteem in which she held him was too violently in contrast with the resolution that she had had, that she still had, to separate him from her daughter; and he could not but protest against this contradiction, all the more painful to him, the more unintelligible it was.

"But, then, madame," he exclaimed, "why have you treated me, why do you still treat me, like a person whom you do not esteem? I know that I have nothing which could very much gratify a mother's pride, that my family are of *bourgeois* station, and that I myself am destined to a career simply honourable. But is there here a reason that justifies this determined refusal which I feared in your departure from Paris, which I now read in your eyes, in your tone, in your whole attitude? You have made other engagements? I think it must be so," he continued, shaking his head, "and you will not tell me. You have the right — and still," he added, in an agonized voice, "if it is the young man whose name has been mentioned to me, I swear to you, madame, that Mademoiselle Jeanne would be happier with me!"

This cry of ingenuous jealousy had no sooner escaped him than he felt its imprudence. But how recall the spoken word?

"A person has been mentioned to you?" she asked. "Tell me who it is. Yes, tell me. I have a right to know what is said about my daughter."

"Monsieur de Barrois," he answered, after a minute of hesitation.

"Monsieur de Barrois," repeated the mother. "I thank you for letting me know. It is natural enough," she continued, with an irony which revealed the increasing fatigue of her nerves, "that this man of rank who comes among *bourgeois* like ourselves to obtain a dowry should circulate this report. I shall put a stop to it. It is not less natural," she added, "that jealousy should make you credit a bit of gossip so absurd. For, after all, what has Monsieur de Barrois in his favour? The man is a libertine and an idler. He has a title, it is true. Did you think," she insisted, "that I was capable of deciding for this reason, for the sake of having a daughter a marquise? Yes," she affirmed, seeing, at this simple remark, the colour again come into the young man's face, "you did think it." And her voice grew singularly bitter. "Ah! that would indeed be too great a deception to have certain feelings if one did not have them for one's self. Besides, we do not deceive ourselves. When I saw that you were interested in Jeanne, Monsieur Salvan," she resumed, "did I try

to find base motives for your conduct? Why did you seek them for mine, when you saw that I took my daughter away, and understood that I was opposed to your marrying her? Why did you not give me credit? Why did you not think in this way: 'Madame Izelin knows her daughter better than I do, she feels that our characters are not suited to each other, and she wishes to save us both from disappointments, that is all'? Even you might have been able to divine," and it was her turn now to colour slightly, "that this resolution was painful, is painful, to me. I have not concealed from you how sympathetic you were to me; I do not conceal it now. You have in your nature every refinement, every loyalty, I am perfectly conscious, that a woman who has had the experience of life could desire in a son-in-law. If I am opposed to this marriage, it is for no egoistic reason. Try, then, to understand this, and do not oblige me to say more."

"I think I understand you, madame," Lucien replied, after a silence. While the mother was speaking, and as it will happen in certain moments of decisive explanation, all the contradictory impressions through which he had passed since he had been occupied with Jeanne, at once reawakened in him. He remembered both the hopes that he formed from her cordial welcome, and his uncertainties at other times, his disappointment the preceding day, for instance, when he perceived her enter Pompeii, so evidently indifferent

and frivolous; then, their sudden sympathy of feeling during the visit to the dead city, the mother's increasing disapproval at the intimacy of their conversation, and the explanation of it which Jeanne had given him. The enigma of his situation toward these two women became more and more obscure, unless the key to it was simply that the mother and daughter misunderstood one another. "Yes," he continued, "you are sure that Mademoiselle Jeanne does not love me. If this is so," and a tone of entreaty passed into his voice, "and if, as to me, you have that esteem for which I am deeply grateful, do you think it right to forbid me to try to make myself loved by her? There exists between Mademoiselle Izelin and myself, permit me to say to you, so much mental resemblance, we have so naturally the same way of feeling, that this sympathy might perhaps become on her part something closer. If you will allow me merely to live somewhat in her atmosphere, not now, not during this journey, I am too well aware that social proprieties forbid it, but in Paris, in the society where we should naturally meet, that would be a test. Do I need to assure you that, if you permit me this, I will act with all prudence and discretion; and if, in six months, in a year, I have not been able to make myself loved by her then — yes, I shall feel it only too just that you should send me away. But from now till then — "

"From now till then," she interrupted with her seri-

ous voice, "I shall have allowed you to waste your life, to fill your noble, generous heart still more full of a sentiment which I am sure, understand me, absolutely sure, will never be shared."

"Why not?" he asked.

"Why not? Because that identity which you believe exists between your ways of feeling and hers exists only in your imagination; because you are a soul of one race and she is a soul of another; because it is still not too late for you to tear yourself away from that which will never be anything but a mirage. I have been like you," she insisted, with the tone of one who is calling up memories from the very depths of her heart and her past; "like you, I stood on the edge of life; like you, I was fascinated by what I believed to be an accord of souls, a something true. And it was all false. Ah! if any one had spoken to me then as I now speak to you!"

She stopped, terrified at having made an allusion so direct to her own marriage. Although the language of this half-confession was singularly obscure to the young man who listened to it, there was too much sincere grief expressed there for him not to be touched by it, and at the same time he formed a too evident conclusion: Madame Izelin was opposing his marriage to her daughter because she had, in regard to this daughter's character and heart, a mistrust — of what nature? a suspicion — a suspicion of what? This evi-

dence was suddenly so hard for the lover to endure that he replied: —

"But are you sure, madame, that you are not mistaken? It is very daring in me to touch on such a subject, but in saying to me what you have just now said, you give me the proof of so much confidence! And, besides, I cannot leave you, now, without being entirely frank myself. I do not know what will be the result of this conversation for myself. I should be, not consoled but yet less unhappy, if it resulted in clearing up, in some degree, a situation which I can see must be most painful both for you and for another person. You must pardon me," he added, hesitating as he spoke, "if I venture thus to interpret your words. It seems to me that they give the idea that the chances of unhappiness, if you consented to grant me your daughter's hand, would not come from my side. Pardon me if I go still farther. But, yesterday, in our walk in Pompeii, it seemed to me that she felt, also, on your part, a severity, — almost an ill-will, — and that she suffered from it. I have not lived very long, and still I know that between natures of great delicacy, and seemingly most fitted for mutual esteem, there may be a settled misunderstanding. I was only too conscious yesterday that Mademoiselle Izelin — she also, on her part — was disturbed at not being fully in harmony with you, and that she was made unhappy by it."

"Ah!" the mother said. "She spoke of me to you?

I might have known it. And at what time in the day? While you were finishing your walk in the Street of Tombs, and I waited for you? I suspected it."

"Madame," exclaimed the young man, "do not, I implore you, take in this way what I have been so unsuccessfully trying to say to you. I had seemed to divine in your face a certain displeasure —"

"And then," Madame Izelin interrupted, "you questioned her? You asked what was the matter? And what did she tell you? But I, too, divined it, what it was that she told you, merely by looking at you afterward, merely by seeing you now! She complained of me," the mother continued, as if speaking to herself. "It would be so, of course; and you believed her — that would be so, too."

She had risen, while saying these words, to which Salvan dared not reply. It is with certain conversations as with those walks over undermined ground, where suddenly the foot awakens an echo so prolonged that one stops short. It was a like surprise at the echo of his words that now seized Lucien. He became conscious of secret, unexplored depths, of all the interior ravage of prolonged meditations and solitary griefs, in this woman who now alarmed him by the inexplicable emotion with which he saw her overcome. She had ceased looking at him, and had gone, as if to tranquillize herself, to lean upon the window-sill. He saw the gray masses of her hair, her head resting upon her

white, contracted hand, her other hand nervously grasping the edge of the window. What meant this sudden outburst of indignation against — what? Against a complaint whose nature she could not even suspect? What inconceivable, strained relations existed between this mother and this daughter, that they should appear to suffer from each other to this degree? But Lucien had not been dreaming yesterday; Jeanne had really said to him those words: "I have ventured to talk a little, and you have seemed to be interested in what I was saying. That is why she is displeased." And — to make still clearer the meaning that was clear enough already, of what she had said — she had added the remark about her father, explaining, if not excusing, the widow's sensitiveness toward her daughter, younger, and in the full charm of her beauty. Nor had he been dreaming just now, in hearing Madame Izelin refer to her own marriage, and utter that cry, wherein was expressed all the sadness of her ruined life, that "It was all false!" that "If any one had spoken to me then as I now speak to you!" She, then, had been unhappy in her marriage? That Jeanne should not know this was only natural. But it was not natural that the mother should hold enmity toward her daughter because of the miseries of her own married life. Nor was it natural that, at the faintest suggestion, she should suspect the girl of being unjust toward her. The young man was afraid of what she might be going to say to him when

she should emerge from this silence, more strange than her words. His heart beat hard, as at the approach of some catastrophe, when she suddenly turned, her face contracted, her eyes almost stern.

"Jeanne is coming in," she said abruptly. "She is just getting out of the carriage at the door of the hotel. In two minutes she will be here. Place yourself there," and she indicated to Lucien the door which from the little salon led into her own room, "behind this portière," and she pulled together the heavy material, after partly opening one leaf of the door. "You must do it," she continued; "you must know the truth. Then you can decide for yourself." She repeated, "You must do it," and there was such imperative command in her look that the young man obeyed, without demur, a plan whose eccentric character only became clear to him when, hidden behind the heavy folds of damask, he began to hear the two voices, that of the mother and that of the daughter, exchanging very simple, unmeaning remarks, as it would have seemed to any other person than himself.

But the words which Jeanne was saying, believing herself alone with her mother, so belied her words of the preceding day, her way of taking a certain allusion that Madame Izelin made contrasted so strongly with the kind of restrained feeling that she had shown to Lucien in the visit to Pompeii — the entire conversation was so evident a proof of the artificialness of this

nature, in which all was expression and nothing was true with genuine truth, that the man who loved her could have cried out with anguish. This evidence was made more painful and more convincing by this peculiarity of it — that he heard the timbre of the young girl's voice without seeing her face. For the first time, being no longer under the prestige of her delicious beauty, all in her that was so self-willed and so factitious was, as it were, made perceptible to him by her tone of voice. She had a certain too gentle and slightly emphatic way of uttering her sentences, which had been extremely fascinating to him when smiles and glances accompanied this intonation. He suddenly felt that this beautiful voice spoke *false*, and it hurt him once more in that place far within, where one perceives the infinitely small things of life, those nothings that escape analysis and almost consciousness. But what a rôle they play in the history of one's heart! They are the only revelations that we have of the *personality* in those whom we love or whom we hate — that personality which may possibly be unlike what they do at any given time, but can hardly fail to be like their voice, if only we know how to listen to it!

"Well!" the mother had said, "did you find what you wanted?"

"Yes, mamma," Jeanne had replied. "I decided on the dog-collar with nine strands, with the little gold bars. I can exchange these in Paris for bars with

pearls. You should see how pale the coral is, almost white, so becoming to me! So good of you, mamma, to give me this! You are always so good to me!"

"You are happy with me, then?" the mother asked.

"Perfectly happy," the young girl replied. "Why should I not be? You are so indulgent to me, always."

"Perhaps I shall not have a very long time to pet you," Madame Izelin resumed. "I am so worn out. You know life has not always been easy for me."

"I know it, mamma," said Jeanne. "You have not been ill, this morning?"

"No," the mother replied. "But when I think of you and that you will soon be married, I say to myself that you may perhaps have great trials in your life as a woman, and I would like to be sure that at least you have had none in your life as a girl."

"What trials could I have had, mamma?" Jeanne asked.

"One never knows," the mother answered. "If there were anything in my way of treating you that has given you pain, — even the least, — you must tell me."

"What an idea!" the young girl said coaxingly. She took her mother's hand and kissed it. The soft sound of her lips in a long caress was just audible to Lucien, whose heart almost stopped beating as he heard this question put by the girl in a tone half playful, half emotional: "I think you must have some reason for speaking to me like this? I think I know what

it is! There is some new plan in the air as to my marriage."

"You are quite right," Madame Izelin replied.

"And may one ask the candidate's name?" said the girl, still playfully.

"It has come to my knowledge," replied Madame Izelin, "that Monsieur de Barrois has sounded some of our friends to know whether he could take a step in this direction on our return. I have not yet replied. You know I have told you, once for all, that when you are asked in marriage by any one, I shall tell you all the objections that I think are well founded; and then I shall leave you to decide freely. What do you think of Monsieur de Barrois?"

"I think," said the young girl, "that I have never dreamed of him as a husband, but that I find him very agreeable."

"You have no positive objection, then?" the mother asked.

"Not any at all," said Jeanne.

"There is no other person, then, whom you love?" insisted Madame Izelin.

"There is one person whom I love — it is you!" said the girl. And her companion of the preceding day, with a yet more painful amazement, heard her play her rôle of the petted and grateful child. That one, among all the attitudes of this truthless soul, was the one from which the mother naturally suffered most.

She slipped away from it usually, but this time she allowed her daughter to show herself off, to make all the display she wished. "Yes," the girl repeated, "there is a person whom I love; it is you! And I shall love Monsieur de Barrois, if you think best. Marquise de Barrois — that sounds well, certainly; but first we must be sure that Monsieur le marquis would make a good son-in-law! Julie will be jealous, mamma; *she cannot endure to have anybody seem to prefer me!*" The same words that she had used the preceding day to define her mother's feelings toward herself recurred to her. On one point, the conviction that she was surrounded by universal envy, this girl, so instinctively artificial, was sincere. "But," she asked, "are you not going to tell me who wrote you about Monsieur de Barrois?"

"That is my secret," the mother said; "only I wanted to question you before I replied."

"Well," Jeanne said, "you know all. I am going to write to Julie," she added; "may I mention it to her?"

"By no means," replied the mother.

"I understand," said Jeanne. "Besides, I have enough to write about. I have already *done* Pompeii in my journal. I only have to copy the pages for her, making some little changes. I shall hear no more, I hope, about her tiresome *Feria* at Seville last year! Oh, say, mamma, if I am to be married soon, they could put diamonds on the bars of the coral necklace. That would be so much better."

This last remark was followed by a silence, and then the sound of a door shutting, which made Lucien know that Jeanne had left the salon; and almost immediately Madame Izelin came to raise the portière behind which he had been concealed. The mother's eyes were even more troubled than usual. He could have discerned in them, if he had had the strength to reflect, a pity for himself and a regret for what she had just ventured to do; for, whatever were the faults, or even the vices, of her daughter's character, she was her daughter, and the other, the man whom she had resolved thus to cure of his illusion, was a stranger. But the lover, at this moment, saw, felt, but one thing — the girl whom he loved did not love him. All the earlier part of the conversation had been very painful to him, proving as it did that Jeanne had simply tricked him the day before in representing herself as a victim of her mother's envy. It had been very painful to him that their visit to Pompeii, which he had wished to keep forever sacred in his thoughts for her sake, had been to her only an epistolary theme, to be used to astonish a cousin. But how easily he would have pardoned these failures of feeling if she had answered differently when her mother questioned her as to the marquis de Barrois! It was this proof, unanswerable, definitive, of her indifference toward himself, that he could not endure! He said very softly to Madame Izelin: "You were right, madame. There is nothing more for me to do in Naples.

I shall leave to-night." He bowed to her silently, and, before she could find a word to say, he was gone.

She remained for some minutes motionless; then, abruptly, without stopping to put on her bonnet, she rushed to the door and down the stairs, hoping to overtake him before he left the house. She felt a need of speaking to him again, of explaining to him more fully her motives in what she had done. All her scruples of the past months, ending in this strange and cruel scene, vanished from her thought in presence of the distress that she had read upon the young man's face. She reached the hall, at the foot of the stairs, only as he was just going out of the hotel door. Twice she called him, but he did not hear; or, perhaps, he was unwilling to return. Then, when the *portier* came to ask if she would like to have the boy run after *ce monsieur français*, and ask him to come back, Madame Izelin suddenly woke up to realities. She said, "No, it is not worth while;" and went upstairs to shut herself into her own room and weep. She had perhaps saved Lucien Salvan from a marriage which would have rendered him unhappy, but she had lost in him the person who, of all others, would have been dearest to her as a son.

Thus she had been sitting, crying, in her own room, for fifteen minutes, when she heard her daughter call to her from the salon. Collecting all her strength she called back, louder than was necessary, that the loud

tone of her voice might conceal its emotion, "I am coming directly," and bathed her eyes that the girl might not see the traces of tears. For years the tricks of word and manner that Jeanne employed to commiserate her mother's sadness or indispositions had been particularly painful to the latter. At the present moment such factitiousness was physically unendurable. But this trial was spared her. Jeanne was too much occupied with herself to observe her mother's face. She had brought in her letter, and was so pleased with it herself that she wished Madame Izelin to read it, and held it out to her, saying: —

"Here is my letter to Julie. See what you think of it."

The mother took the sheet of paper covered with its large, stylish handwriting, in which a graphologist would have discovered an arid and capricious nature by the letters without down- or up-strokes, all equally heavy, and by the *t*'s crossed at the top. It consisted of a series of sentences upon Pompeii, very adroitly borrowed from the conversation of the preceding day with Lucien. She recognized the young man's own words, her words, a word from the guide-book even — the whole giving the idea of a nature so fine, so accessible to art! Salvan's name, of course, was not mentioned. Before this little masterpiece of artifice, the mother's melancholy redoubled. She said to herself, "I did well;" and to her daughter she said: "Your letter is admirable. It is very prettily written."

"I thought you would not dislike it," said the girl, who could not grasp the secret sarcasm of the mother's phrase; "I wrote it with feeling. That is the only kind of letter that I like. That is what I love so much in Italy. Everything appeals to one's heart here."

"If he had read this letter, and if he had seen her like this," the mother thought, remembering the scene of the past hour, "he would believe her!" And again she said to herself, "I did well."

FLORENCE, May, 1901.

III

GRATITUDE

GRATITUDE

I

THE incident I am about to relate was told me in London, last July, by one of my American friends, Mr. John W. Kerley of Syracuse (N.Y.). It seemed to me something very unusual, and I wrote it out at once, as I am accustomed to do in the case of any story that I hear which seems to me to contain somewhat of human truth.

Even less exceptional, the incident still would have interested me because of the narrator. Mr. John Kerley — Jack Kerley, as he is familiarly called — is a peculiarly representative type of a certain disposition of mind which is very American and is recognizable, in a less degree, in many of his fellow-countrymen resident in Europe. Briefly stated, it is this: Jack Kerley adores his own country and cannot endure to live in it; he despises Europe and can live nowhere else. There is another point of resemblance between himself and his compatriots: he is a man of no particular age. His thin and shaven face, refined in features

and energetic in general aspect, might as well be fifty as forty-five. He has that singularly sallow complexion, often seen in America, which indicates a bilious heredity from past generations of whiskey-drinkers rather than wine-drinkers. Colouring like this, saturated, as it were, with bile, has never had the freshness of youth; and, on the other hand, neither does it show the advance of age, so little can the deterioration of the blood be detected in it. In the case of Kerley this grayish face is lighted up by two blue eyes, rendered bluer still by contrast, in which shines out all the determination of a true son of the Stars and Stripes. He has that thin-lipped and bitter mouth, so often seen in America, which shows a shuddering disgust, an excess of nervous susceptibility and an excess of effort, too much reflection, and too much will. When one has been in New York, and has known a great many Americans, he recognizes in that bitterness of the smile, a sign of the moral dyspepsia by which they are so often attacked — which is, in itself, only a form whereby physical dyspepsia makes itself felt. This is really Kerley's malady; but he knows it. Nothing makes him happy; he acknowledges this, and gives very good reasons for it. He is very American, also, in his overstrained conscience. I can hear him now saying to me, as he did when we first met, some ten years ago, in England, during a Saturday-to-Monday visit at a charming country-house in Surrey: —

"You have a liking for a cosmopolitan life. You make a mistake there. I have led that kind of a life. I'm living it now. There is nothing in it, I assure you. To begin with, it is not being honest. We have not the right to spend in a foreign land the money that comes to us from our own country. Look at me, now. My clothes, my rooms, my books, everything that I have, is paid for by checks on a bank in Syracuse, my native place, a city — that you probably never heard of — in the state of New York. Its population is only about eighty thousand. Where does the money come from that I have on deposit in that bank? It is rents from blocks of houses that my father built with Syracuse material and Syracuse labour; and these houses are valuable only because they are of use to people in Syracuse, whose industry earns the money to pay me these rents. Every time I sign a check for my tailor or my boot-maker in London, it is the same as taking American labour and giving it to these Englishmen. It is not a good citizen who does that! All cosmopolitans would say the same if they had any heart."

"But if you feel like this, why don't you go back to America?" I asked.

"Why don't I?" he said. "It's because my father had the unlucky idea of sending me 'across the ocean,' as we say in America, under the pretext of having me learn foreign languages, while I was still very young. Two years in France, two in Germany, three in Eng-

land — seven years, in which I was in the States only during my vacations. My father died, and as soon as I was my own master I completed the damage by going to live in Italy. Do you know America? You don't? Well, when you go there you will understand just as soon as you touch New York, just in going from the wooden pier to the hotel, that to live in America a man must work. Everybody works. There is no room for a dilettante, an amateur, an idler, like me! Ah! if I had sons, I swear to you I wouldn't bring them up in a way to make them strangers in their own country. I'd put their trolley on the American wire."

I did not know how truly American his metaphor was until I had, acting upon his advice, visited those cities where the whiz and gong of the trolley-car mingle at every instant with the common sounds of life.

"In America," he continued, "all is rough, but so young; incomplete, but so full of life; incoherent, but so vigorous! Everywhere one breathes the future and its fruitful energies. Here, all is polished, but effete; orderly, but feeble; finished, but impoverished. All belongs to the past; I do, myself. This is the infirmity I have contracted in Europe — a love of the past, a need of it. Look there," he added, pointing to the castle whose guests we were for forty-eight hours, its red-brick structure, contemporary with the Tudors, appearing through the trees, centuries old, of the park in which we were walking, "that is what I love now

— all this stage-setting behind which duration impresses one. And this is absurd; for it is a duration in which I have no share. Our rôle as Americans is to boycott the Old World. We must be, ourselves, ancestors; we are to be the past of a grander America. All of us who do not conform to this programme are like me — we have made a failure of our lives."

When an American of the better kind, as this man was, criticises himself with such lucidity, be assured that he does it to anticipate what you may say and forestall your criticism. This is one of the thousand signs whereby appears that extraordinary self-love tormenting this hyper-sensitive race, which seems, at the same moment and with equal excess, to believe in itself and to doubt itself. These observations — and others like them which this very clever Jack Kerley has made to me since — all derive from the extreme acuteness with which he perceives the secret weakness of his broad culture. To say the whole thing in a single word — a word somewhat offensive, yet perfectly accurate — Kerley is but a variety of the American anglomaniac, the most subtle, the most delicate variety, but, all the same, an anglomaniac, who has grafted upon his own Yankee nature the tastes and habits and ideas of a refined and art-loving Englishman. Among other things, he has taken on the passion of such an Englishman for the Italy which preceded the sixteenth century; and his house in Hans Place contains a real

quattrocentist museum, which would enrapture any late surviving pre-Raphaelites. It is here that the imitator in him comes to view. He realizes an ideal, which prevailed at the time he entered upon British life *now*, when this ideal is passing away. But that which will never pass away is the beauty of the *tondo* of Filippino Lippi, which he discovered in some little Tuscan city; and the fineness of the mosaics of Fra Giovanni da Verona in the two choir-stalls of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, which he had the opportunity to buy; and the purity of style of thirty other paintings, terra-cottas, wood-carvings, bits of marble, which make his salon and his library the most charming of environments wherein to entertain at tea duchesses of æsthetic tinge. Mr. John W. Kerley is not only an enthusiast about Italian bibelots, he is also a supernumerary in that composite troupe which, in England, gravitates toward the *peerage*. You will observe his name, during the season, at all the week's end parties mentioned in the journals; his autumn is passed in visits at the most exclusive country-houses; and his winter is spent from villa to villa between Cannes and Florence, without taking into the account that no person of note in the arts, in politics, or in literature, arrives in London but Kerley is among the first to make his acquaintance.

To associate the whole year through, however, and that on terms of intimacy, with very noble, very rich,

and very famous people when one's own name is merely Mr. John W. Kerley and one's whole fortune does not much exceed two hundred thousand dollars, is of necessity to suffer a little in that reserve of legitimate pride which demands that all intimacy presuppose equality. With a weak-souled person these petty stings cause envy. The shy soul is made misanthropic by them. Jack Kerley is too refined to feel envy, and he is too fond of society to be content with solitude. And so he continues to lead this aristocratic life, with its endless small vexations, seeking all the time to add to his little gallery, so that, in one respect at least, he can take precedence; and he indulges in auto-irony: —

"I have only one claim to distinction," he will often say, "but I have that, without dispute. I am the American who is *not* a millionnaire — the only one in Europe."

This quite relative poverty of his is a point in regard to which I habitually tease him; and it was exactly this which led to his telling me the story I proposed to myself to relate without any sort of commentary upon it, and then was led to make a sketch of the man himself. I see him now, as he was that afternoon, in July last, when he related to me this incident; and I could fix the exact date of it. It was two days after the auction at Christie's of the series of studies left by the late Sir Edward Burne-Jones. The papers had

published details of the sale, the bids being marked by that extravagance which these phlegmatic Englishmen carry into their infatuations. I called for Kerley, at about four o'clock, that we might go together to a house in Grosvenor Square to hear some Norwegian music, played by a Polish pianist, at the residence of a Scottish lady, the affair being in honour of a celebrated Austrian statesman, introduced in London society by a Portuguese diplomat. O cosmopolis! I found my man in his library; he was alone, was dressed to go out, and was awaiting me. He did not perceive my entrance, so hypnotized was he, so to speak, before a frame placed upon an easel, where shone resplendent one of the aquarelles I had most admired at Christie's two days before; the most precious, perhaps, of all those relics of the great painter for which men had been fighting with bank-notes. It represented one of the master's favourite subjects, a "Marriage of Psyche." In a mountainous landscape, wild and verdant as a valley in the Highlands, the bride advances, sad as a victim, attended by her companions, who scatter flowers with a slow gesture at once resigned and despairing. These tall, frail figures, draped in their long veils, seem like a funeral procession; and, in the supple build of the body, almost too tall, in the line of the dreamy profile, in the reddish brown tone of the hair and eyes, they all have that grace so profoundly, so intensely, English that

Burne-Jones has been able to disengage from the feminine type in his country. Yes, it was truly an artistic jewel, almost capable of supporting comparison with the marvels of Tuscan art which the self-styled "poor" American had been able to gather about him. I complimented him upon it at once, while laying my hand on his shoulder to notify him of my presence, and I began, somewhat mischievously: —

"Well, well! You, even you, have let yourself be carried away! You have been as extravagant as any everyday millionnaire from New York or Chicago! And how well you have done! This is a masterpiece, this aquarelle!"

"Is it not?" he said; and the habitual bitterness of his face seemed to melt, as it were, into a kind of ecstasy which quickly gave way to an expression of singular irony: "I have not the wealth for such a purchase as this," he said; "the few poor bibelots that I have here have only this merit, that I spent much marching and countermarching in obtaining them. I have at least this American virtue, if I have no other: the taste for struggle, the love of fight. I have made a poor use of it, spending thirty years in collecting what a magnate of the mines or a petroleum king could acquire in a moment, merely by signing a check! No. I could not have made myself a present of this Burne-Jones. It was given to me yesterday; and in circumstances so peculiar that, since yesterday, I have to

look at it, as I was doing when you came in, I have to touch it, and handle it, to be convinced that I am not the sport of an illusion." And, as he spoke, he took the aquarelle into his hands, testing its weight as he gazed at it; and again his face was transfigured by enthusiasm. "Well!" he said, as he replaced the picture and looked at his watch, "we have time to walk to Grosvenor Square across the park; will you do it? I should like to tell you how it happens that I have this treasure in my possession, here in this house in Hans Place, which, two days ago, by no means expected such an adventure. That thing," he said, "does great honour to the Old World; but the way in which it came to me does great honour, also, to the New; and you know, it makes no difference my not living with my compatriots, I love them, and I assure you they are worthy to be loved. Deep down in the American soul there is a strength of feeling that you never meet elsewhere; and, withal, an astonishing capacity of recovery, of making a new start, while—"

He stopped, to spare my feelings; and I could see, flitting across his shaven lip, a vague smile of derision for European inferiorities. It did not occur to me to take offence at this. We Europeans can never put ourselves at the point of view which masses us all together in the unity of our continent. A time is coming, perhaps, when our posterity will consider us very unwise not to have divined that it is, after all, the truth — a terrible, a formidable, truth.

Meanwhile, I was fully avenged for the disdain of this son of the New World by the simple fact that he was here in a London street, and was so glad to be here, rather than walking in Broadway or Fifth Avenue. We had passed through Sloane Street and then Piccadilly, and entered the park by the Albert Gate; and now, under the beautiful soft gray sky of a warm summer afternoon, in this fresh scenery of verdure and of water, we could see all aristocratic and luxurious England defile before us. Private carriages, emblazoned, varnished, cushioned, followed one another, crossed each other, were crowded together, the tall, powdered coachman sitting very straight upon his box, the minute tiger beside him. Softly balanced on the C-springs were women adorned with necklaces of pearls and diamonds as if for a ball, in toilets at once light and of the most dazzling splendour. Some were very arrogant and hard looking; but, also, how gracious were the gracious ones, and how beautiful the beauties, with that air of health in their elegance! My companion bowed to this one and to that one; and a childish vanity lighted his brow and eyes when a ducal coronet adorned the landau whence a familiar nod and cordial smile descended upon him. Meanwhile, he was relating to me the promised story, in which the rôle he had played was all impregnated with the spirit of Yankee puritanism; and I felt in the tone of his voice that this dilettante, a trifle snobbish, too, was, under

all and above all, this especially: a Puritan, scrupulous and sensitive, in the depths of whose soul burned unceasingly the moral and civic flame of the passengers on the *Mayflower*.

II

"It was exactly twelve years ago," he began. "I was returning from Italy and had stopped at Monte Carlo to see some friends. You do not perceive any relation between that not very ideal spot and the 'Psyche' of Burne-Jones? Wait till the story is told. I was to spend a week in that abominable place, which has only one good thing about it; but it has that — those wonderful terraced gardens. I have often been surprised, by the way, that some essayist has not written a page on the palm trees of those terraces. They ennoble the immoral compost which is heaped up at their feet, as the work of a degraded artist — a Byron, an Edgar Poe, a Baudelaire, a Verlaine — ennobles the vices from which it springs. I give you this comparison just as it presented itself to my mind while I was walking in those alleys with that view before me, one of the finest in the world! I was enjoying it much, but, as usual, with a secret remorse. I attended the concerts, which are excellent, and you know whether I love music; and this pleasure also caused me remorse. Behind this orchestra, as behind these groups of trees

and flowers, I saw too distinctly the detestable money of the gaming table. I employed, to tranquillize my scruples in some degree, a procedure, not original with me, which I recommend to you. I have it from a Boston woman, devout, and music-mad. It consists in estimating as nearly as possible what sum of money represents, for each visitor, the keeping up of these gardens and this theatre, and then systematically losing that sum at the tables. Try it, when next you are there, and you will find your conscience much relieved.

"One evening, then, I was at the Casino for the purpose of paying this new kind of tithe — that is to say, I amused myself with playing, having the fixed intention of leaving the table as soon as the croupier's rake should have drawn in the amount which I had decided to lose; but it will not surprise you that, having decided to lose, I gained instead, at first. I had taken out of my *porte-monnaie* a hundred-franc note. It was shortly transformed into some fifteen hundred-franc gold pieces, and I now amused myself by throwing these down by handfuls upon the green cloth until the luck should turn — it always does turn! I ended by losing all that I had won except ten louis. I risked these two last pieces upon the black — we were playing *trente et quarante* — which had just won thirteen consecutive times. It won a fourteenth time. I was about to pick up my new gains, almost regretfully, and had leaned forward in this intention

over the shoulder of the seated player behind whom I stood, when I saw opposite me a hand extend itself and grasp the four gold pieces. I looked at the thief who had just ventured this astonishing act, and who was a very young man, and, involuntarily, — decided to lose though I was, — so strong in us is the instinct of ownership, I cried out: —

"'But, sir, those twenty louis are mine!' I repeated it, 'They are mine!' And, as I had instinctively called out in a loud voice, one of the players, who had chanced to notice me laying down the gold pieces, confirmed what I had said: —

"'Those twenty louis certainly belonged to this gentleman,' he said, addressing the croupier, who stopped paying the bank's losses to ask: —

"'Who is the person who took up those twenty louis?' and, addressing me, 'Should you recognize him?'

"'Certainly,' I replied, and I was just going to point to the spot where my thief had stood half a minute before; but he was no longer there! Though questions and answers had passed with the greatest rapidity, and I had but for a moment turned my eyes toward the croupier, that moment had sufficed for the young man to disappear and be lost in the crowd, which stood deep around the table. I glanced rapidly over this crowd, saying, as I did so, 'But he was there!' And, at the instant, surprise choked my voice. I had just

recognized him standing close beside me. Having committed the theft and finding himself on the point of being seized, he had slipped around the table, in some inconceivable way, and here he was, in the place where it was most unlikely that he would be, at the very elbow of the man whom he had robbed. My amazement at seeing him close to me was now increased by something even more unexpected: I felt the same hand, which just before had so rapidly snatched up my four gold pieces, now grasp me by the arm and hold it tight in a grip that trembled. Our eyes had met. He had become aware that I recognized him, and he had made this sudden movement in order to stop me if I had meant to strike him. I have told you that he was a very young man. In an instant's flash, with that inconceivable rapidity of sensations which accompanies a crisis like this, I read in his pallid face a desperate entreaty; and I also divined that he was, like myself, an American. By what sign did I know this? I shall not try to explain it to you. Nor shall I try to explain the irresistible pity for the suffering stamped upon this face, still so young, which overmastered me to such a degree that I felt myself incapable of denouncing him — which was, however, my duty in the case. It is always a duty to have a thief arrested, whoever or wherever he is! Instead of that, however, I can hear now how I blundered out to the croupier: 'I shall have to lose it. I ought to have kept a better

watch. I don't see him now.' 'Then you make no further claim?' the croupier asked; and I replied that I made no further claim.

"When I said these words, the hand upon my arm relaxed its grasp; and what happened next on my part I can explain even less than my previous conduct. I had yielded just before, as I tell you, to an emotion of pity, very spontaneous and really very excusable, for a poor young fellow whose imprudent distress showed plainly that he was not hardened in crime. It followed naturally, you know, that I should now complete my charitable act by talking with him and seeking to know what motives were hidden behind this theft, which might even, perhaps, excuse it. Well! I did nothing of the kind. I had no sooner let the words fall, that secured impunity to that young man, than I was ashamed of my leniency as of the most culpable weakness, as of complicity, I will even say, though I had practised it to my own detriment. I no longer felt, in respect to him whom, however, I had just saved from a very serious peril, anything but a kind of wrathful indignation; and as, after releasing my arm, he lingered near me, evidently upset and wishing, but not daring, to speak to me, I turned abruptly toward him and, in a low voice, but with the most contemptuous and insulting tone, I said to him, in English, 'Get away, get away, you damned rascal!'

"He made no reply. The blood rushed to his face,

just now so pallid. His lips quivered, as if trying in vain to speak. His eyes filled with tears. He seemed to hesitate a moment, then bending his head under the disgrace, he obeyed my brutal injunction, and I saw him cleave a path through the rows of spectators crowded around the table, and disappear — on his way to what new act of villany, to what crimes, perhaps, or to what repentance? His shameless action, on the one hand, and on the other, his strange attitude; the impudence of the theft, followed by his emotion at my insulting words, gave scope to all sorts of conjectures. I felt this so deeply that I now wanted to follow him; and I, in turn, pushed through the crowd, seeking to find him and to learn his story. It was labour lost. He had disappeared completely.

"Did you ever have the singular feeling of having been any one's fate — I mean to say, of having met a man, at some decisive moment of his life, and of having, by some act of yours, insignificant in itself, thrown the switch for him to one track or another? If you never have, I shall hardly be able to make you understand the disproportionate place that this Casino episode began to occupy in my mind. No sooner had I left the hall than the distressed face of the young thief began haunting me with singular force. Do you know this thing — the retrospective scrutiny of a face that has been seen briefly, in circumstances too striking to be forgotten, and whose secret we mentally strive to

decipher, but always without success? As a result of what adventures had this child — for he was really a child, one of those overgrown boys that one often sees in America — how had he come to be guilty of this contemptible theft? Why had he chosen me, specially, as his victim? Had he recognized me, as I had him, as being an American, and counted on some indulgence, on the part of a compatriot, in case of detection and arrest? And again, but this time as a matter of reflection, I relapsed into that duality of contradictory feelings which had made me, at the table, first spare him, then speak to him so brutally. I began asking myself whether I had done well in following these two impulses; and now an impression began to weigh upon me, unjustified, illogical, and yet irresistible: what if this theft had been the young man's first criminal act, what if that moment in his life had been one of those solemn instants when a whole destiny is decided? I ought to have ascertained this before speaking to him as I did. I recalled the supplicating look he had lifted to me, and I now read an appeal in it that I had not at the moment understood. What appeal? An entreaty not to despise him because of his fault, to talk with him, to listen to him, to assist him. Suppose that he had stolen for some one else: for a sick mother, for an infirm father? Suppose he were merely a lover, and had stolen for the woman's sake? Twenty hypotheses crowded into my mind, and by turns I accepted and

rejected each. I considered myself foolish even to form them; and all the time this imploring face came before my memory, and I felt a kind of remorse at having made no other answer to it than that rough apostrophe. It was somewhat as if, crossing the open country by night, I had heard some one cry, 'Help! help!' and I had passed on without looking round. I say again, I cannot explain the strange impression that this chance meeting left upon me. It chanced that this impression did correspond to a reality, and my two impulsive movements — first my pity, then my anger — were destined to have a decisive influence upon the destiny of this unknown person. You will think what you please of it. We Americans, who pass for practical men, and who are so when we need to be, are also convinced spiritualists, believing, with Hamlet, that there are more things in the world than our philosophy can explain. I am, accordingly, persuaded that, by a phenomenon of second sight, I divined this influence. But no matter about that; it has no connection with the story of the aquarelle — at which I have now arrived.

"We must avoid exaggeration. To quote Hamlet to you once more, here is my motto 'This above all, to thine own self be true.' And so, I am bound to tell you that though I never entirely forgot the young thief of Monte Carlo, the impression was besetting only during the first few days after this episode. Then I ceased to think of it, except intermittently; and cer-

tainly, I was not thinking of it in any way, day before yesterday, at Christie's, while I followed the auction of poor Burne-Jones's drawings. I had attended the sale in the hope that some one of these marvels might not exceed the sum which my very limited means permit me to devote to a whim. It really was, however, something more than a whim which made me desire to have a relic of this great painter. I loved him personally so much; and, as it happens, I had nothing from his hand. While the bidders wrangled over these *débris* of the purest artist of our time, I recalled in memory my visits to his house, in the remotest part of Kensington, and that salon which had been Richardson's, where he used to walk about among the furniture of green lacquer on a background of the same shade. With his light step, his easy gesture, his eyes the colour of water, his transparent complexion, the fleeciness of his light beard, he suggested an inevitable comparison with some legendary personage such as he delighted to paint, some gentle, shy Undine wandering through the silent depths of a sea-green grotto. Alas! I shall never again ring at the door of 'The Grange'; and this is why regret for the noble, dead master was so strong in me that the whim to have a relic of him became a real need, and I began to bid on this aquarelle of the "Psyche," which, suddenly, from forty guineas leaped to eighty, to a hundred, two hundred, a thousand. It was I who called out this sum to the auc-

tioneer — I, who had always had a horror of objects of art obtained by brute force of money, and for whom to collect is to discover a picture, a statue, a wood-carving, and to frequent it, to lay siege to it, to pay court to it, to win it by a lover's ardour, a diplomat's finesse, a devotee's patience! I spent six years in gaining my Filippino Lippi, which I found in a city near Lucca.

"A thousand guineas! And already the aquarelle had gone up to eleven hundred. This sum recalled me from my madness, and, letting the auction take its course, I was preparing to go away, lest I should succumb to some new temptation. As I turned round I perceived, bent upon me fixedly, two eyes, which caused me at once to stop short. I recognized the look, but not the man. Then, suddenly, came an illuminating flash. It was the thief of Monte Carlo, twelve years older, with broader shoulders, a face grown fuller, but too much like himself in the outline of the features, and a certain strong and daring expression of the face, for a mistake to be possible. He was dressed with an extreme care, which seemed to tell of wealth. To meet him again in this way, after so many years, was so stimulating to my curiosity that I came very near speaking to him. Then I observed that he ceased to look at me, and went nearer to the auctioneer's platform; and a doubt seized me as to the fact of identity. Meanwhile, the auction continued, and I thought that

I noticed my former thief to be a bidder for the aquarelle. Two thousand two hundred guineas, and sold! A name was given, which I shall ask you not to try to learn at Christie's, and I shall not tell you myself. It is the name of one of the men best known as having obtained a colossal fortune in Cape mines. The idea that my unknown boy of the gaming-house and this potentate of African 'claims' could be one and the same, appeared to me so unlikely that I did not even seek to verify it. I determined to think of nothing except the Burne-Jones that I had lost, and left the auction room to avoid the temptation, not of disputing one of the painter's masterpieces with some mine owner but of accosting the man himself and asking him if it were really he who once stole sixteen pounds from me at Monte Carlo, and whom I so brutally insulted afterward without his finding a word to say in reply. You will see that these are not questions to be asked."

"And it was he?" I asked, as Kerley stopped speaking.

"It was he. How he came to be there at Christie's, at my side, during the sale, I never knew; whether it was by chance, or whether he had seen me in the street and followed me in. How he learned my name and address, likewise, I do not know. What I do know is, that yesterday evening, returning from the opera, I found in my house Burne-Jones's aquarelle, for which I had bid in vain, with a note which I want to show you. All America is in it," and taking from his over-

coat pocket a letter with type-written address, he read as follows: —

"DEAR SIR: You have doubtless forgotten a little debt contracted toward you twelve years ago, by a young gentleman who himself has not forgotten it. Thanks to that money and to the lesson that accompanied it, that young man has been able, by his own industry, to become what he now is. It would be too long a story to tell you how. But let me say this: that young man was then at Monte Carlo literally without a penny, after having gone thither with money which was not his own. The manner in which you dealt with him, pardoning him a very serious fault, and making him feel how serious it was, made such a revolution in him that he left that night for London, determined to reconstruct his life by labour, and begin by earning enough to pay an earlier debt — that which had enabled him to go to that detestable gaming-house. This first debt he paid. Since then he has worked for himself, and God has favoured him above his deserts.

"In his prosperity he has always regretted knowing nothing of you — neither who you were nor where you lived, that he might pay his second debt, the one which he owed to you.

"Circumstances to-day permitting him to fulfil this wish, you will permit, dear sir, a fellow-countryman to beg you to accept this picture which you desired to

buy. I owe you much more than that, since without your extreme goodness toward me at a certain moment, my destiny would have been entirely different from what it has been. I will add that I have kept for twelve years an exact account of the sum which is due you. I have calculated it to within a hundred francs since my departure, first for the Colorado mines, and then for those of the Cape, regarding you as having an interest of $\frac{1}{102}$ in my affairs. My capital amounted to exactly a hundred and two times the eighty dollars that you allowed me to keep. But you doubtless would see objections to this adjustment. I hope that you will see none to keeping this aquarelle.

"And believe me

"Very faithfully yours,

"_____

"I omit the signature. There is the whole life of a man in that letter, you know — the life of a true man. When you are amazed, you people this side of the water, at our enterprise, at what we call our *pluck*, you do not understand that almost every one of us has some special idea in his soul which supports him. In the case of this man, it was repentance for his momentary errors. When I read his letter my first idea was to find out his address and send the picture back. Then I re-read it, and I began to feel that I *ought* to accept it, and all the more since I only hold it in trust.

Years ago I made my will, and I consider my collection as not my own property. I have left it to my city — that Syracuse in which I shall never have lived. But I shall be there after I am dead, and that is one way of being a good citizen, don't you think so?"

COSTABELLE, March, 1899.

IV

THREE INCIDENTS OF WAR

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THE three stories that follow, to which I have given the collective title of "Incidents of War," although one of them deals only with an episode of the Grand Manœuvres, have been related to me by officers. I have carefully indicated the attendant circumstances, in order to give these conversational narratives their proper frame, as I have sought to keep their true flavour. It has seemed to me that these anecdotes are, in a way, each other's complement, and hence that they may appropriately follow each other. The second is merely picturesque, but perhaps in the first and last may be found something of that emotional strength which caused Joseph de Maistre to say, in a famous page of the *Soirées*, that the soldier's functions *are connected with a great law of the spiritual world.*

I

HIS BOYHOOD'S FRIEND

THIS story was told me, not long before his death, by the lamented Commandant Percheux, the witty, one-

armed officer whom *habitués* of the club of the rue Boissy d'Anglas have surely not forgotten. It scarcely resembles the somewhat too free and caustic talk of the old soldier who had become a hardened Parisian. Perhaps it does him more honour. I, at least, found it very touching when he related it to me — far away from Paris, it is true; far from that corner at the club where he was wont to hold court between the hours of five and seven.

It was in his native village, on a rocky ledge in the little park adjacent to his paternal mansion, that he confided this incident to me, his mood softened, doubtless, by the place and by the memory — poignant, indeed — which an inscription cut in this rock had awakened in his mind. The name of the village will be familiar to the commandant's friends: it is a picturesque little place, called Saint-Sauves, in Auvergne, whither I had gone — from La Bourboule, where I was taking the waters — to pay a visit to the retired officer. The inscription, rudely cut with a knife, consisted of the German word *Ostern*, which means Easter, and a date, 1858. Imagine below this ledge a green, romantic valley, in whose depths a brook meanders which, later, becomes the river Dordogne. At the left the thatched roofs of the village are grouped in the distance, and, a few steps from us, between the lustrous leaves of the walnut trees, the yellow silhouette of an ancient house appears, with a "priest's garden" in front of it, very

small, and brilliant with sunflowers and hollyhocks. Above all this unfurl a beautiful French summer sky, warm and blue, and you will not greatly wonder that this ensemble of sweet, familiar things should have plucked Percheux from his sarcastic mood, and that this disabled soldier, who scarcely ever showed feeling, should for once have thought aloud in another's presence.

"There was a time," he began, when I had inquired about the German word and the date, "when I should not have answered you. It is true that at that time I should not have brought you to this spot. I could not even, in those days, come here myself, because of this inscription, to sit here on this rock, from which we have the finest view of all these mountains. It recalled to me memories that were too sad, and, specially, the mad act that cost me my arm and, with it, my career. But as one grows old he regrets it less if he has made a failure of his life. Besides, had I remained in the army, what would have been the advantage, I ask you, since the miserable men who now rule us have not made war, will not make it, cannot make it? This horrible thought that we have resigned as a nation, sometimes consoles me for having been obliged to lay aside the uniform. In short, I can now endure these memories. I sit here, and I see, as if it were yesterday, the Easter morning when these letters and this date were cut by a charming classmate of mine, a

German boy. He had come to pass the April holidays with me. At that period there was no Alsace and Lorraine between us and them; and we had no suspicion that between them and us they saw always Jena. I am now perfectly sure that the father of Otto de Winkel — that was my comrade's name — in sending him from Stettin to Versailles, to complete his knowledge of French, had in mind making of his son a good guide for uhlans in the future invasion for which they were already planning in Berlin. But if such were his father's designs, Otto no more suspected them than I did. He certainly was the best and most sincere of all my schoolmates in the *lycée*, where my parents had placed me to fit for Saint-Cyr. I was myself, in some degree, a stranger at the school, coming as I did from this remote corner of Auvergne. It may have been that this feeling of being far from home which we both had was the secret reason of our mutual sympathy; or it may have been, on the other hand, the very dissimilarity of our characters that made the tie. Between friends, as you know, differences attach quite as often as resemblances do. I was then, just as I am now, a cross-grained sort of fellow, and Otto was the sweetest and most obliging of comrades. From my earliest youth I had, without any cause, moments of almost savage ill-temper, just as I have them now, with only too good reason, alas! Winkel, with his good-natured round face, chubby and rosy, whose large

features betokened a rough, primitive race, was always laughing, with the good-natured laugh of a young colossus. He was very tall and awkward. I was undersized and very adroit; with all this, we became such a good pair of friends that this visit here in the spring holidays was considered by me as the most precious Easter gift I could possibly receive — and by him in the same way.

"While I am talking with you I see him just as he looked the day after his delighted arrival! Up to the last moment he had feared he might not obtain his father's consent. He lay there on the rock where you are now; I had brought him here that he might admire the view. He was seized with one of those attacks of German sentimentalism concerning which we have since learned that it may be allied with every form of rapacity; but at sixteen, even Monsieur de Bismarck no doubt uttered, with tears in his voice, that word *gemüthlich*, by which those fellows over there express everything — their vague feeling for nature and their full-blown satisfaction in being well off; their reveries and their beatified stupidity after a heavy meal; and, without any doubt, Otto was very honest and simple-minded in those days. In the depths of his eyes, so blue, laughed and dreamed the truest goodness — a goodness somewhat crude, like the outlines of his broad face, a little stupid and clumsy, like the movements of his big limbs. He had at once, as his blue

eyes roved over this landscape, uttered the inevitable *sehr schön* with a youthful enthusiasm which melted into romantic emotion. He turned and looked at me. He took my hand and, with tears in his voice and on his cheeks, he said to me: —

"'Swear to me that we will be forever friends, my friend!'

"And notwithstanding his atrocious German accent — after two years in a French *lycée* — the clasp of his hand was so loyal, the affection emanating from his whole being was so warm, that I became as idiotically sentimental as he was; and I replied to him: 'I swear it to thee!' with the same boyish solemnity.

"Whereupon, to commemorate this oath of a new Patroclus and a new Achilles, he took a stout knife from his pocket, opened it, and using a heavy stone as a mallet to strike upon the handle, he began to cut into the rock this *Ostern 1858* that you see there. After more than thirty-five years, I still hear the grating of the blade upon the rock, the blows of the stone upon the handle, his breath, as he worked hard at his task, and his delighted laugh when the six letters and the four figures were legible; and he said to me, looking at me with his candid eyes, the most triumphant '*Voilà!*' that ever artist uttered before a masterpiece. How near it is, a boyish friendship, and yet how far!"

"And you met, face to face, during the war?" I asked him, as he ceased speaking. I feared that he

might suddenly interrupt this confidential strain by a return to his habitual mocking tone; and though the adventure that this story announced would be evidently of a commonplace and, as we say nowadays, sensational order, I desired to hear it from his own lips. I was to experience, once more, how many more shades reality has than the imagination dreams of.

"It was not exactly that," replied Percheux, "although we came very near it. But let us go more slowly. Between this year 1858, when we swore eternal friendship, and the war of 1870, when we risked meeting one another, revolver in hand, since he had become a Prussian officer and I a French officer, we had met scarcely more than once; and, notwithstanding our solemn oath, we had, of course, ceased to exchange letters. It is the usual order in schoolboy friendships. We had met, this one time of which I speak, in one of the restaurants of the Exposition of 1867, each in the company of other comrades, with only time to recognize each other, tell each other our present profession, and exchange addresses. The following day I had found his card at my rooms. Some circumstance prevented my returning the visit at once, and when I went to see him at his hotel he had gone back to Germany.

"I will acknowledge to you that in leaving for the army of the Rhine with my dragoons — I was captain — I scarcely gave a thought to my former chum at Versailles and Saint-Sauves. He had, indeed, told

me, at the time of our brief meeting, that he was in the service, but without indicating which branch; and I did not know but he might, for some reason or other, have resigned between the time of the Exposition and the war. And so I did not think of him at Forbach, or Rezonville, or Gravelotte, the first three battles in which my regiment took part. Nor had I thought of him that afternoon of August 31, which was the first of the two days' fighting at Saint-Barbe. That was the last time I was able to use my sabre! I used it well, though, that afternoon! That was also the last genuine attempt that the Marshal made to break through the circle of investment shutting us up in Metz. The engagement had been late in beginning. Although as early as six in the morning we were in motion to cross from the left to the right bank of the Moselle, it was not until four o'clock that the guns opened fire; and at half-past seven we received the order to charge upon a body of cuirassiers and uhlans, who had thrown our first line into disorder and were bearing straight down upon our artillery, in a great plain lying in the corner between the road to Sarrebruck and that to Sarrelouis. We were hidden, when this order reached us, near the latter road, in the shelter of a little wood, in front of the village of Mey. Upon these horsemen, coming at full gallop and having no idea of our presence, we fell in flank; and an hour later there was nothing left of them. We held both roads, and if daylight had not

failed us, we should have occupied Retonfey the same evening. We did indeed make an advance in that direction, but word came to us to fall back; and we returned to the point where the charge had been made, at the intersection of the two roads.

"This is what is called sleeping on the field of battle. It sounds well; but, as a matter of fact, this triumph for us, who had had nothing since black coffee in the early morning, consisted in sleeping, supperless, in the open air, on ground soaked with the rain of two days before. My orderly, whose duty it was to follow me with a fresh horse and a supply of food, had judged it safer, when the first bullets began flying, to return to Metz, where, two days later, I found him. There was not a morsel to eat for any man, nor a truss of hay for the animals. I was only too lucky in having a cloak in which I could wrap myself; and I lay down upon the ground, while my horse was taken in charge by one of my dragoons — who fell asleep, sitting, with the animal's bridle over his arm. I was not slow in following his example. The man who has not slept that kind of sleep has no idea what sleeping is. My slumber had been so profound that at daybreak, when I was awakened by the white light of dawn and the chill of the morning, it took me a full minute to become conscious where I was; and I perceived that we had been lying pell-mell among the dead whom we had sabred the evening before. My first impression on

finding myself thus surrounded by these dead bodies was like a nightmare: they seemed to me immense, almost surpassing human stature; and these light-haired giants thus scattered over the ground, most of whom were in white tunics, yellow boots, cuirasses, and enormous helmets, sent through my veins the half-shiver of a fear that I had not experienced in charging them some hours before, and sabring my best. I got up, that I might shake off this nervous weakness, and began looking at these dead men. There were among them four officers, recognizable by their epaulettes. I approached one who lay face downward upon the ground, one hand ungloved, and on his wrist glittered one of those large gold ropes that the Russian women sometimes make their lovers wear. The sight of this bracelet touched me. The idea came to me that if I searched the man's pockets I might perhaps find some indication by which I could restore it to her to whom it belonged. I stooped, and at the first movement I made to turn the body over I recognized my schoolmate at Versailles, the boy who had been with me in the Easter holidays twelve years before — Otto de Winkel."

"What a moment!" I exclaimed; "it well accounts for your horror of this memory!"

"But you are wrong," he replied, shaking his old, whitened, soldierly head. "It is not this memory that so long was a horror to me. There is developed in the soldier on a campaign a kind of fatalist philosophy,

if I may so call it. Nothing astonishes him now; and death, particularly, is not to him that exceptional phenomenon which surprises one as something almost incomprehensible. Absolutely unexpected though the chance was which had made me pass a night in profound sleep only a few yards away from the dead body of my boyhood's friend, it did not seem to me anything extraordinary. Nor was it a very poignant emotion which filled my heart. 'Your turn to-day, to-morrow mine;' the Romans had a proverb somewhat like that, do you remember? This was exactly the impression I felt in the presence of this dead man, whose attitude, as he lay, was peaceful rather than sad. I should lie thus, perhaps, to-morrow — this afternoon — in an hour from now! This idea which, it would seem, should have rendered my contemplation even more painful, made it, on the contrary, more tranquil — soothed it. Another idea came to me which, expressed in words, seems frightful: perhaps, in the *mêlée* of the evening before, when I had struck at random and in the twilight, it was my own sabre which, at some weak point of the cuirass, made the wound I was looking at, whence had flowed the blood with which the white cloth of the tunic was stained. I said that also to myself, and still, I did not cease to look at the wound and at the man who lay there dead. The memories of our common past came over me at the same moment; and their contrast with the present was not bitter to me as you

would suppose. It was an indescribable feeling of acceptance, of curiosity, and of pity — to which I should have done better not to abandon myself. You will see why.

"During the moments that I had passed, thus hypnotized in the presence of the dead, my men were wakening all around me. And abruptly — whether because the sentiment of duty was aroused in me, or whether because, as I had some reason later to think, the possibility that I myself had killed him was secretly more painful to me than I knew, I turned away without having carried out my pious intention or even endeavoured to take off the bracelet which still glittered on his wrist. To touch those lifeless limbs, to unlace that cuirass, to open those garments, to seek thus the means of paying to a dead enemy one of those duties of the brotherhood of arms which are a part of the soldier's religion — all this would have been perfectly easy toward an unknown person. To come so close to this man — who had been my schoolboy friend and whom I had perhaps myself killed — was too hard for me. Besides, I had no longer time. A courier had just ridden up with an order to move off to the right, in the direction of Colombey. A fog was rising, so dense that it would soon render any movement very difficult, and the enemy's cannonade was already beginning, though it was not yet five o'clock. We had, fortunately, only about two miles to go, and we were an endless time

about it. It was necessary to keep off the road to Sarrebruck, now swept by the enemy's fire and by our own — the artillery of both armies disputing it, the German from Montoy, the French from Bordes and Vallières. When we reached the wood of Colombey the fog had disappeared. It was half-past seven. I have a reason for remembering this fact, for I had just taken out my watch when I heard two of my men exchanging remarks upon the engagement of the preceding evening: —

"'I thought you were left there,' one said to the other, 'when that big Prusco of a captain attacked you. How did you get out of it?'

"'It was my horse saved me. He shied and received the stroke. Then I sabred, and that did it. You didn't see me?'

"It is probably true, as I said, that unconsciously something within me shuddered at the thought that my former friend was perhaps slain by my hand, for the most irresistible, the most unreasoning of impulses made me question the second of the two speakers, and I asked: —

"'Then it was you who killed one of the officers?'

"'Yes, captain,' he replied.

"'And which one?' I asked.

"The man laughed. 'I didn't ask his name,' he said. 'It was a tall man, fair, with a skin like a young lady's. That I am sure of!'

"'And you noticed nothing further?'

"'Nothing, captain.'

"'It was already almost dark when we charged. Are you sure you should recognize him?'

"'Should I recognize him? I was close on him when I killed him,' he replied.

"'Suppose I ask you to go back there with me and show him to me?' I asked abruptly.

"'Back there? Where we slept last night?'

"I said, 'Yes.' And as he hesitated, I continued: 'You are afraid. It was not you that killed him.'

"'You think I didn't kill him?' the soldier cried out. 'Come, captain! You shall see if I am afraid.'

"We set off, the soldier and I, at a rapid trot of our horses. What impulse had I obeyed in proposing to this brave fellow an expedition so insane, and in making pretence of doubting his courage? I did not know then, nor do I now. I had suddenly perceived the chance of assuring myself positively that I had not killed Otto de Winkel, and I grasped it with an ardour which contrasted oddly enough, you will think, with my previous composure, at first sight of his dead body. I shall not try to explain it to you. This eagerness to ascertain the true author of this death was neither reasoned out nor reasonable. It was even worse than that. In war to encounter a needless danger is almost as culpable as to shrink from a needful one. And my fault was twofold, since I imposed upon another also

this needless danger. At first all went better than I deserved, for we galloped along this road to Sarrebruck under a raking fire from two batteries, without having even a scratch, neither ourselves nor our horses; and we dismounted in the field where we had slept the night before, and where the white giants still lay scattered. My heart was beating violently, would you believe it, and can you tell me yourself why, when we approached the corner where Winkel lay, I experienced an inexpressible relief — from what? I ask you further — when the trooper, who had leaned over the body, cried out: —

"'He is the one, I am sure of it; and you can see, captain, for yourself, that I am telling the truth, for I said I sabred him like this.'

"'Can you assist me to unbuckle his cuirass?' I asked.

"'Why not?' he replied. 'But it is tempting Providence, captain.' And he made a sign to me to listen to a shell that was going over our heads. He had such a carelessness as to danger on his jocose face that I felt bound to justify myself to him for bringing him there, and I said, pointing to the dead officer: —

"'I knew him in France, when we were boys; and I would like to see if there is not something on him that I could send to his family.'

"'I understand, captain,' the trooper said, with his everyday shrewdness, divining the singular scruple which had made me bring him to the spot; and he urged, as he began undoing the cuirass: 'What the

devil made him attack me so furiously? But we must take things as they come; isn't that so, captain? Good, here's his pocketbook,' and he held it out to me; 'here's his watch,' and he handed me that. '*Tiens!* he has a bracelet on! Shall I take it off?' And, on my affirmative reply, he held that out also. We had but just completed this spoliation — which was really a pious act, and would have seemed to an ignorant looker-on the most sacrilegious brigandage — when I felt myself struck, as if by a formidable fist. By the report and by the whirlwind of dust which sprung up around us, I was aware that a shell had just exploded. My trooper was standing very near, looking at me with terror, and I was lying on the ground, my right arm shattered. The pain was so intense and the loss of blood so great that I believed myself fatally wounded.

"'I am nipped, my lad!' I said to the brave fellow. 'If you can get away, you shall have something for your trouble. Take my pocketbook. I give you all there is in it; and get off!'

"'And leave you here, captain?' he replied. 'Never in the world! It's quite enough to have killed your friend for you. Can you move your legs?' he asked; and on my affirmative reply, he picks me up in his arms, sets me astride on my horse, tells me to hold on to the mane with my remaining hand, takes my bridle on his wrist, and jumps upon his own animal. Again we take the Sarrebruck road under the fire of the

artillery, and again follow the brook of Colombey. When we reached the squadron I fell fainting from my horse. The same evening I received my promotion — and my arm was cut off. Life was ended for me."

"And did you at least find the address to which to return the bracelet?" I questioned.

"Yes," replied Percheux. "I sent it just as it was, with some letters and a picture that he had about him, and not a word with them. Would you believe that at the time, and for many years after, I could not forgive that poor fellow for having been indirectly the cause of my spoiled career? I blamed him for having made me commit a military fault! For it was one, and an unpardonable one, this freak of mine, in search of what, I ask you? Now that I am approaching the age when, even if I had my two arms, I should be retired, I like to think that from the other world, where there are neither French nor Prussians, my boyhood's friend saw my soldier and me remaining under fire long enough to pay him the homage that soldiers owe to a dead enemy who has fought gallantly. For that reason I can come here to this place and look at this inscription without too much sadness. You will be surprised to know that I come here with the same soldier who was with me then. He waited on you at table this morning, and will wait on you this evening. After Metz he never left me. He has been my *valet-de-chambre* for twenty-five years. He knows all this story; and

my dead friend owes it to him that the word and date, *Ostern 1858,* which tell of Winkel's visit here, are not destroyed by moss and lichens, and that the path to this rock is always kept in order. Soldiers feel like this. You need to have been in the service, in the field, to prove and know them. War has its cruelty and brutality doubtless; but all the same, take my word for it, it is a noble, human thing."

COSTABELLE, April, 1900.

II

BOB MILNER

WE were talking that evening, in the smoking-room, at the house of Monsieur B., of the "insularity" of the English, of that indestructible inner energy, by grace of which, under all latitudes, in all social surroundings, through all adventures, they all, old or young, men or women, have the secret of remaining identically themselves, as it were, impenetrable to the atmosphere around them, with the ideas and tastes, the feelings and the habits, formed in their little native place, in Surrey or Yorkshire, in Devon or "the Border." Many of the Frenchmen present related anecdotes upon this subject, more or less legendary, and showing especially another indestructible fact, namely, the difference of mentality of these two countries sepa-

rated by an arm of the sea, and morally as distant as the antipodes. Among these stories of no great value one struck me as extremely significant, on account of a curious and dramatic mingling of eccentricity and courage, of loyality and absurdity, almost. It was related to us quite simply by General de Roysord, whom none of us would have suspected, from his jovial red face, quite too much that of the *bon vivant*, of having passed through "experiences" like this — to use an Anglicism that seems made for the occasion.

"For my part," he began, "the most singular Englishman I ever knew had nothing in common with the noble lords and aristocratic ladies whose eccentricities you have been narrating to us. He followed the occupation of a dog-seller, and had upon his sign the commonplace and very humble name of 'Bob Milner,' and under it the word 'Breeder,' which has no exact equivalent with us. It is the French *éleveur*, but the 'breeder' deals only in dogs of certain races, and those absolutely pure-bred. Milner lived near the aqueduct of Point-du-Jour, close up to the fortifications, in a wooden shed, where I fully expected to lose my life. When I speak of having known this man, I give you the idea that I saw him often, as a customer, perhaps, and that my relations with him were of a commonplace order. On the contrary, I never saw him but once in my life; but that once counts for a hundred, two hundred, a thousand times, — you shall decide.

"I was at that time a very young captain. It was about the first of May, 1871. You will suppose, from the date, that it is a story of war. Be tranquil, it will be short; and there is nothing heroic in it, so far as I am concerned. After being taken prisoner at one of the engagements which preceded Forbach, I had made my first escape in November. I had been again taken, and a second time had been able to get away and return into France, but not until the end of January; and when I arrived in Bordeaux, to report to the minister, the war against the invaders was ended and that against the insurgents was about to begin.

"I had been transferred to a regiment of the line which, at this date in May, was encamped around Paris and, precisely, at the Point-du-Jour. It was a dismal post, and the memory of it would remain as a nightmare of weariness in my mind, notwithstanding the tragic character of the epoch, had not the episode of the dog-seller been included in it! You must acknowledge that for a young officer who had passed five months of devouring impatience while fighting was going on without him, it was a very enervating business to wait under a casemate the order to march, and have nothing in sight but a line of fortifications and an aqueduct.

"Our duty consisted in watching the river banks and the ramparts, and here and there picking up a marauder, and, at lucky moments, exchanging shots with some

detachment of communists, who, at intervals, made a vague reconnoissance in our direction. It was not these encounters that did us much harm. The real danger for us was in the stray shells which, from time to time, and although we were protected by Mont-Valérien, reached us from some battery firing volleys. Held as we were there, motionless and expectant, this irregular bombardment, which now happened and now did not happen, irritated still further our impatience to fight. In truth, we were all tempted to hate our chiefs for this slowness, which I now can see very clearly to have been wisdom itself. In the presence of revolution, those who have the honour to represent the cause of order must take no risks. A defeat may have extremely serious results, in giving encouragement to other elements of insurrection scattered and concealed throughout the country.

"One does not reason when one is twenty-five and has blood in his veins, and has that eagerness to distinguish himself which sees in danger a chance for glory. And so I cursed the tactics of the prudent marshal so often and so heartily that by dint of looking toward Paris the idea came into my mind one night to go and ascertain for myself whether a certain bastion, whose mass lay a little in front of the aqueduct, and whence there had come for a half-week no sign of life, was really well guarded or not — one of those breakneck projects, you know, stupid things

when they fail, brilliant deeds when they are successful! After thirty years, mine seems to me to have been not a bad scheme. It was there, exactly at that point, that our troops entered ten days later; and if I had had more luck, I should have opened this passage for them — and then! I should not now be merely a poor retired brigadier; I should be historic and national! But to my story.

"I have not told you my project: it was only that, taking advantage of a fine moonlight night that lighted up half the river, I proposed to swim up-stream, keeping on the side that lay in shadow, land on the shore, creep up to the bastion, visit what part of it I could, and return as I came — or not return. I was an excellent swimmer, so that the prospect of returning to the camp without having been out of the water at all, if I found no place where I could land, caused me no anxiety.

"I had no sooner formed this audacious plan than I put it into execution. I rolled my clothing in a piece of rubber cloth and tied it up with a string and arranged it so that I could carry the package on the back of my neck, while I was in the water, without inconvenience. I told my lieutenant what I was about to attempt, so that he could await me on my return at a given point, and if I did not return would know the reason of my absence. As a matter of form he offered the objections which you will divine. I received them in the way which you will also divine; and at one o'clock in the

morning I was there in the river, swimming slowly upstream, carefully saving my strength, and also on the lookout for nets, which we had heard barred the passage against attempts like mine.

"I made it a point to be very sure of my way and not to fall into any snare. Each stroke of my arms was, so to speak, a movement of exploration. If I should live a hundred years, I should never forget the moments thus passed. In this spring night the water was deliciously cool and wrapped me in a supple caress, which made me the more conscious of the tension of my excited nerves. From my shadow I saw the current flowing past in broad waves of silver in its lighted portion, and the stars throbbing in the sky, and the outline of the aqueduct projecting black. Was it on account of the light almost equal to that of day, or was it merely a whim of the gunners of the commune? Certain it is that the noise of an artillery engagement far in the distance could be heard; and once the hiss of a shell above me made me instinctively put my head under water.

"At last I was under the bridge; I heard the ripple of the water against the piles; an eddy compelled me to a greater effort to strike over to the left and reach the bank. I encountered no net, but, on the contrary, a ring, placed there to moor some boat. I clung to it, and with my hands and my bare feet seeking crevices in the stone wall of the quay, I clambered to its top.

Then I lay flat for several minutes. Hearing no sound, I ventured to undo my package and to dress under the arch, whence I finally emerged, keeping close to the wall, my army revolver in my hand. The warmth of my clothing, which had been hermetically protected by the rubber cloth, and a mouthful of brandy from my flask, had restored its warm circulation to my blood. And never in my life had I felt more fit. It was as if I were going to take Paris myself, all alone!

"It was I who narrowly escaped being taken, there and then. I had not gone fifty steps, slipping along under the arches of the aqueduct, when, at the angle of a pier, I found myself face to face with a sentry, who doubtless had seen me coming and was lying in wait for me, for he charged at me with his bayonet, crying a 'Who goes there?' which I hear still. I have said that I was armed. But the report of a pistol would notify all the soldiers on guard within a quarter of a mile in every direction.

"My communist was young and slender, scarcely more than a boy. I was athletic and a trained wrestler. I avoid his bayonet-thrust; with a back-handed stroke I knock his weapon from his grasp, and I give him a blow on the breast that would fell an ox. He stumbles and falls on his knees without having strength to cry out, and I run at full speed toward the river. At the corner of the aqueduct I perceive men marching: it is a patrol making the rounds. At this moment a shot

notifies me that the victim of my recent blow has recovered consciousness. The signal is heard by his comrades, and they stop. I also stop. My road is barred.

"By an instinct, to which I owed my safety, I had rushed outside the arches of the bridge as soon as the sentry fell, and my first steps of flight had been protected by a sort of fence, along which I had run. Still listening to the voices of the communists, who were talking with each other, I noticed that this fence ended, a little farther on, at a house,—a hut, rather,—where a faint light showed through a window. There was every probability of its being a post of communists. Still I made for it, with the idea that possibly this post was empty and that no one would think, in the *battue* which was about to follow, of looking for me there.

"When I came up to this cabin, I stood motionless for some time, surprised that I heard not a sound from within. Then I came a few steps farther toward the window, and, standing on tiptoe, I saw inside, by the light of a candle, a man occupied with something so completely unexpected, at that time and in that place, that it seemed incredible: he was seated, and held upon his knees one of those English spaniels that are called Blenheims. The little creature was evidently very ill, for its eyes were half closed, and it yielded almost inertly to the man's hands who, with extreme care, was opening its mouth to pour in a few drops of a liquid which he had in a bottle.

was a little mastiff, surly and trustworthy, like one of his former household, whose pelts now hung on his walls. I was going to test his good qualities by making use of him; but first I sought to know what strange existence this subject of Queen Victoria had found means to lead since the first investment of Paris, thus possessed, thus dominated by his passion for his dogs, which had ended in his having left, from what must have been an admirable collection, only these two Blenheims, of whom one was dying.

"'Well, my dear fellow,' he replied, when I had finished, 'what is it to me, I ask you, whether these brigands take you or not? I am not a Frenchman, nor am I a German. I am an Englishman, and I am here to work. My work is to raise dogs. Ask those who have dealt with Bob Milner if they ever found him in the wrong, and if the dogs he sold them ever failed to be pure-bred dogs? Ask, I tell you! Not a mongrel among them, my dear fellow. I have never had a mongrel in my place. Sir, it is of me that Madame la duchesse d'Arcole bought her Skyes. Did you know them? I sold Monsieur Casal his fox terrier. I imported the collie that used to go walking in the Bois de Boulogne with Madame de Corcieux. And people used to come to see me; every day, in those times, carriages would stand at my door. The handsome ladies would come to inquire, "How are you, my dear Bob?"

"'The war breaks out. I have twenty-five animals,

sir, all with their pedigrees, and all acclimatized. I hesitate about going away. Everybody had been so good to me, I say to myself, no one will harm me; it is better to stay, it will be better for the dogs. Sir, you see those Skyes,' and with a shaking hand he pointed to the long, silky, grayish-haired pelts, 'those were the first that those cannibals took from me — to eat them, sir, — to eat Skye terriers! That is what they call requisitioning. I made a stand; but when I found that they would put me in prison, and that there would be no one to feed the other dogs, I said, "Take them; but let me keep the skins." I killed them myself, so that they should not suffer; then I took off their skins. A dog, sir, it has a soul, you see! Those dogs knew that their friend Bob loved them — even then!

"'Then there came a lucky moment; that was when the shells began to fall in our quarter. You understand, then they no longer came to torment me. The dogs were a little frightened at first; they barked when the shells whizzed overhead. After a while they became accustomed to it. I made little kennels for them underground, in the garden. I lived there with them myself, badly enough — they, too. We had canned provisions, which we shared. They were all there then. We were protected. Not a splinter from a shell fell here. It was the Germans, when they came in, who killed four of my dogs and took away five. It was no use to complain. It was a band who had been

drinking. What could I do? Then we went from bad to worse. Sickness broke out among them. Then these fellows here came afterward and did me harm again and again. Not all my dogs, but only two little ones — see, those poor fox terriers — they had seen me taking them out with coats on. They killed the dogs and half killed me, under pretext that I insulted the people. Insulted the people! Because my dogs had coats on! But when dogs are sick, haven't they the right to be taken care of like human beings?

"'In short, sir, with your wars, your socialisms, your barbarisms, here is all there is left me of my property. And the property, it isn't that; but here is all that is left me of twenty-five of the prettiest little creatures that ever took prizes, — these two Blenheims, — and one of these, that one there, King, is so sick, so sick! Go away, young man, and leave me to nurse him. What do you suppose I care whether they catch you or not? Each man for himself, you know, in this world! Your communists have notified me that if I ever have the least thing to do with Versailles, they will burn my house and shoot me. Come, now, be off, or I shall call them!'

"All this had been delivered with breathless rapidity, an accent that is absolutely inimitable, and the gestures of a pugilist. For the moment I impersonated to the little man, it seemed, all the miseries which he had endured for the last eight months — as a result of his

own pigheadedness in not going away. His wrath was so sincere, and his complaints, however comic from one point of view, were in truth so legitimate, that it never occurred to me to be indignant because he now proposed to make *me* expiate all the cruelties that the various soldiers who had passed that way had practised upon his poor little animals.

French or German, regulars or insurgents, this Briton confounded them all in one common hatred, which was not at all shared by the poor animals who were objects of his idolatry. The little Blenheim, the last survivor of the precious band, the one whom I had seen asleep, curled up in his basket, had not only ceased barking, but, while his master was talking, had come smelling about me. Then he had begun to seek, in all those pretty ways which these little creatures practise, to attract my attention. In the centuries that have passed since Van Dyck used to paint these spaniels in the laps of the princesses who were his contemporaries, they have acquired, as a result of living in the continuous companionship of their masters and mistresses, a kind of social instinct which gives them sympathies and antipathies at sight. They have the gift of knowing at once to what social class the visitor, whom they have never seen before, belongs. They snap at a labourer and fawn upon a gentleman with a discernment which is snobbish in them, if you choose to say so, but of which I, for one, have certainly no

reason to complain. See what occurred. By some inexplicable *flair* this Tiny — you will remember this one was Tiny — had satisfied himself that I was worthy of an aristocratic dog's acquaintance. Accordingly, after having turned round and round a dozen times or more, and nervously scratched the back of his neck with his hind paw, and with his fore paw struck at his long ear, he came and rubbed his nose against my leg, and when I mechanically held out my hand to him, he licked it softly with his little pendulous tongue, and I scratched his head with my fingers. The moment when I was yielding to this demonstration of affection was exactly that in which my host was putting his cruel alternative to me: 'Be off, or I shall call them!' throwing me back into danger, perhaps death.

"'Your dog is more good-hearted than you are, Mr. Milner,' I said simply, calling his attention to the affectionate animal whose large, prominent eyes were fixed upon me full of that obscure, emotional soul which seems to think as well as feel. '*Adieu, monsieur,*' I said, again caressing the little dog. 'Good-by, Tiny,' I said in English to the Blenheim. I grasped my revolver tightly in my hand and turned toward the door.

"Was it that the contrast between his attitude and his dog's made Bob Milner feel ashamed? Had the caress with which I welcomed Tiny's advances revealed to him a share in canine sympathy? Or did the three

English words I had just spoken, in reminding him of his native country, suddenly reopen in that primitive nature the springs of deep-lying humanity? With utter amazement I suddenly beheld him rush past me to the door, bolt it, and then, still speaking in English and in a very low tone, begin grumbling at me, all the while pushing me toward the back of the room, toward a door which he flung open and then instantly closed upon me: 'I hear them,' he was saying, 'don't budge, whatever happens — don't budge, or you'll get us all killed, Tiny and me, and you with us!' Then, with suppressed fury: 'Why did you leave your camp and come here? What a damned fool you are!'

"I had scarcely time to get over my surprise at this amazing 'About face!' when a renewed barking from my friend the Blenheim showed that the dog-seller's hearing had not played him false. Men were approaching the hut. Through the thin planks, in the vast stillness of the night, I recognized the measured tread of soldiers marching. Would they pass the house without searching it? My life hung on the caprice of him who was in command. My heart beat so hard and sharp that I could hear it, just as clearly as I heard the steps of the soldiers on the road. As often happens, the immediate presence of danger suddenly calmed my agitation. The men had stopped at the door of the hut. I heard voices, without being able to distinguish

the words. Evidently they were deliberating. Tiny barked more furiously than ever. A blow with the butt-end of a gun struck on the door, which made the frail building tremble, announced the result of this improvised council of war, and this dialogue took place, of which not a word now escaped me:—

"'What do you want now of poor Bob?' cried my host's voice. 'You have ruined him. You have killed his dogs. There are only two left of all he had, and one of them is dying. For God's sake, let the poor animal die in peace.'

"'We are not talking about your dogs,' replied a voice, imperious though very hoarse, and an energetic oath, followed by a second blow on the door, accompanied this injunction. 'Are you going to let us in, old dog-seller, or must we smash your shed? We are looking for a man. Did you see him running; tell the truth! Your dog barked just now, so we know he came this way.'

"'Captain, we are losing time,' spoke up another voice. 'I have been looking through a crack. The old lascar is alone, with one of the dogs on his knees. The creature is sick, I know. He showed it to me today."

"'A man?' Bob Milner answered. 'And how should I have seen a man? I have been sitting here two hours nursing my dog. *You* know that he is sick, very sick, *monsieur le sergent,*'—he then had recognized the man

who had last spoken. 'Tiny barked, I suppose, because some one was passing, but I did not notice. Oh, poor King! how he trembles. They shall not hurt you, my dear! For pity's sake, *monsieur le sergent*, you who know him and know how good he was, ask them to let him die in peace!'

"'You see he knows nothing about our man; he hasn't seen anybody,' resumed the sergeant's voice. 'I stand by what I said, captain, and I repeat it. The man went behind the hut and is now going along on the fortifications. He must either jump off or be caught. He will not jump off, and we shall catch him. Only we must be going.'

"'I should greatly like, however, to smoke out this old *loufoque*,' said the captain, 'who puts coats on his dogs, and makes coffee for them, while we are getting ourselves killed for the good cause! But you are right; the other is more urgent. You shall lose nothing by waiting, old dog-man; we will see you again!'

"With this menacing *adieu* the band went away. I heard the noise of steps growing fainter, and at last I ventured to open the door, surprised that my protector had not come to call me. Much was he thinking of me, verily, or of the captain's threat! He was sitting just as I had seen him, half an hour earlier, through the window, the sick dog on his knees, trying to warm it, though the stiffened paws and body, shaken by convulsive spasms, told clearly that it was dying.

"'I come to thank you, Mr. Milner,' I said; 'you have saved my life.'

"'And you,' he said, with still more anger than before, 'have killed King for me! If you had not come just when I was giving him his medicine, I should have saved his life — yes, I should have saved him! And now he is dying! He is dying! He is dying! But now, will you go — since they have gone away!'

"And, rising from his chair, the sick dog clasped to his breast, he proceeded to draw the bolt, open the door, and push me out into the road, with a violence of which I would not have believed that frail figure was capable. My minutes were precious. I had no time to repeat to him the expression of my gratitude. I remembered the ominous farewell of the captain; I promised myself to try, when we should enter the city, to save at least the cabin and its two surviving inmates, the man and the dog. But the first thing to do now was to get to the river. I got to it. I threw myself into the water, in all my clothes, just as I was, and in so doing attracted a shot from another sentry, which, however, was not well aimed. Fifteen minutes with the current brought me to my point of departure, where my lieutenant was awaiting me. I had not taken Paris, but I had not myself been taken."

"And Bob Milner?" one of us asked. "Did you ever see him again?"

"Never," replied the general. "When we entered the city, some days later, I received orders to go as far in as the Trocadéro. We at once encountered an obstinate resistance in the streets, and all the rest that you know. It was not till the end of the week that I was able to get back to Point-du-Jour. Where the cabin had stood there was only a heap of charred wood, and in it lay, also half burned, the signboard of which I spoke: 'Bob Milner, Breeder.'

"What had taken place? Had Milner been able to escape with his last dog, as soon as the troops came in, and return to England, through horror of the continent and all the people who live there; and then, had a chance shell set fire to the cabin? Or had the communist officer, in a spasm of rage, fulfilled his threat and smoked out the '*loufoque*' and his 'dog with a coat on'?

"This I shall never know, unless by some improbable chance. But for an insular, he was a genuine one!"

NAPLES, March, 1901.

III

A CHIEF

IN a railway carriage, returning from a review, we were talking about that problem of discipline, which is especially vital for these vast modern armies

like the one we had seen manœuvre, where, at the least break, number would fearfully multiply disorder. In this connection it was discussed among us whether there were more or less efficaciousness in corporal punishment, which prevails to this day, it seems, in certain countries. A retired colonel who was in our party took occasion from this to relate an anecdote which we all agreed in thinking very significant. "You ought to write it down," some one said to me. "With the colonel's permission, I will," I rejoined. "Certainly," he said, "If you will suppress names." I took advantage of his permission as soon as I reached home, and you have here the story. It is the colonel who is speaking.

"Corporal punishment in our army? Never! It would do no good, and, besides, it would be impossible. What is it that distinguishes the French soldier when he is good? It is nerve, cheerfulness, push. He is not an automaton; he is a person. All his faults arise from this, and all his virtues. It is the same with the French officer. He is good for nothing unless his men love him. All of them feel this; and there is no army in the world where the chiefs live closer to their men and treat them better — like human beings. To return to what I said before, it is absolutely true during my whole military career,— and it has had its hard days, for I was with Bourbaki in

the East, — I never have but once — once only, you understand — seen an officer strike an inferior; and the little drama to which this brutal act gave occasion is so greatly to the honour of our military spirit in the lower grades, as well as in the higher, that I always think of it with a kind of professional pride; I should say even with a kind of joy, had it not indirectly cost the offender his life — a man who was one of my best comrades, and perhaps the most remarkable officer I have ever known.

"His name was Gustave P., and he was at the time I refer to, the year 1884, a major of *chasseurs*. He was about forty, but so slender, so vigorous, so spirited, that at the head of a charge he gave one the idea of what the great cavalry officers must have been — a Lasalle, a Latour-Maubourg, a Montbrun. Fiery, yet what a power of endurance! He also shared in that retreat in the East, and I never saw him more fatigued at one hour than at another. To these physical gifts of the war-animal, he united the others. There was a memory, and a quickness at seizing the main point! And a passion for his profession! In short, at the time when this scene took place, we all considered him as the man among us who would go farthest and most rapidly, and the more since he had inspired a keen interest — he who had no need of protection — in that general officer who was most powerful at the ministry, General M. These two splendid

soldiers were made to understand each other. The temperament was the same, a generation apart. As regards the service, I mean, for in respect to morals, General M. has always been of the tradition of the Catinats, the Davouts, the Friants: one of those pure-minded heroes who add to their warrior virtues all the virtues of private life; while P., like that Lasalle whose name came to me naturally, suggested by his own, was, in every way, a *brûleur*. He loved the table, gaming, and women, as he did everything, with that ardour which his bold, soldier's face declared, where his blue eyes, showing so light with his browned skin, had the brilliancy and the quick motion of the eyes of certain birds of prey. At twenty-five this keen and soldierly fellow had been a very personification of all fascinating qualities. And so he still was in 1884, though his prematurely whitened hair made him look older than he was, notwithstanding his figure and action, which remained young as ever. He had had many love affairs, in all ranks of life. Some of these I knew about, and others I had guessed. He had never taken any of them very seriously. A gay party with comrades had always been able to make him forget. And so, in the year of which I speak, the Grand Manœuvres being about to take place, when General M., to whose service I was attached, showed me the list of the officers whom he had designated to accompany his staff, and I found P.'s name among them, I could not restrain an expression of pleasure.

"'I know,' the general said, 'you are very fond of him. That is one of the reasons why I have asked for him. He needs some distraction just now. He is in a very bad way. It is some time since you have seen him?'

"'Six months or more, general,' I said.

"'You will find him much changed. It is an unfortunate affair with a woman'—and he related to me, in a tone of saddened disgust, one of those everyday stories which, reduced to essentials, are nothing more than a newspaper item. Only in knowing the hero of this story was its tragic nature apparent. P., at that time in garrison at Compiègne, had formed a *liaison* with an insignificant actress at the *Variétés*, in Paris. He had become passionately in love with her, and she exploited him, and deceived him. She had cost him already more than fifty thousand francs, — an enormous sum for his very limited means. The worst of it was the fever of excitement in which he was kept all the time by this girl's coquetry. His relations, informed by a comrade, lectured him. His reply had been such that they became alarmed, and addressed themselves to the general. He, in turn, had spoken to P. He had happened upon a moment when the younger man was in a state of desperation, but had not been able to obtain a promise of giving the girl up. I still seem to hear the good general exclaiming, at this point of his story: 'I offered to have him transferred to any place

he desired, if only it were remote from Paris; and what do you think he said to me, "In six weeks I should send in my resignation." He! resign from the army! An officer like that, and for whom? For whom? This is why I asked for him: to have him with me during the manœuvres this year, and to speak to him again. Try to influence him, if you can. If he must have a petticoat at any price, let him get married! That is such an easy matter. A family gives a man heart for war. The other sort takes it away. In short, you must help me to save him.'

"I did not attempt to explain to the general that conjugal life had not the faintest resemblance to the mad passion with which our friend was devoured, according to this account. Though no great scholar in this matter, I had often noticed that the age of forty marks a dangerous crisis for lady-killers like this man. Is it the first touch of age which renders them less capable of recovery and reaction? Is it the vanity fed by their past successes which the least sign of falling off infuriates? Is it the idea that at a certain period in life, our share of happy sensations being now complete, a lost love is not to be replaced? Whatever the cause may be, the effect is certain. This was proved to me afresh when I found myself in P.'s company a few days after this conversation. He had come to join us at Esternay, not far from here, and after twenty-four hours' delay — he, the most punctual of soldiers!

If I had not known the fact from the general, I should have divined it at a glance. There was still the same strong and slender horseman, the same haughty and soldierly profile, the same imperious manner of the born leader whose every gesture commands. But in the depths of his blue eyes there was an inquietude I had never seen before in him, the most decided of men; a bitter wrinkle at the corner of the mouth where his fair moustache had turned gray; a nervousness in his whole being and an abruptness in his voice, as of one whom some secret wound continually stings — that voice which, in our youth, and amid the most dangerous encounters, sang so gayly the hymn to Bourbaki: —

"'*Gentil Turco,*
Quand autour de ta boule
Comme un serpent s'enroule
Le calicot
Qui te sert de shako —'

"My impression of his suffering was so keen that I did not allow myself any of the pleasantries with which I otherwise should not have failed to welcome him, knowing what I knew.

"'We were expecting you day before yesterday,' I said to him. 'Has the general had it out with you?'

"'No,' he said, without other comment. 'Where do you lodge me?'

"And outside of this question, nothing; not a word of interest as to what had become of me during these six months. Not a word, either, during our evening meal, which we partook at the mess-table, P. sharing in the conversation no further than by a few words now and then, just enough to prevent his silence being noticeable. He rose before dinner was over and, as I followed him, determined in any case to break the ice, I noticed that he asked a question of a soldier.

"'What were you asking of that good fellow?' I said as I joined him. 'If there is anything *I* can do for you—'

"'I was inquiring which way the quartermaster would be coming,' he replied.

"'So soon!' I said, passing my arm through his. 'You are expecting some woman's letter! Are you never, then, going to reform? You must tell me all about it.'

"'You are mistaken,' he said, disengaging his arm with an air of displeasure, which sufficiently showed me how little his present passion resembled the light intrigues of which he had so willingly, heretofore, confided to me the story. 'It is a letter from a notary on a little matter of business. Ah! there he comes."

"'There is nothing I can do, general,' I said to our common friend that evening. He had sent for me to ask about the demeanour of P. this first evening. 'He was scarcely civil, and had it been any other man—'

"'Yes, but it is not any other man,' the general interrupted me. 'You remember what Napoleon wrote to Prince d'Eckmühl, sending Vandamme to him: "He is unendurable. *But endure him, for he is a warrior, and they are becoming scarce.*" I am not the emperor, nor have you gained the battle of Auerstadt. But Vandamme was no braver than P., of that I am sure. Be patient with him as I am. He must get through this strait without resigning. He must do it. Besides, the work will make him himself again and cure him. We will save him. You will see.'

"This 'you will see,' signified, as I knew beforehand, that these manœuvres were to be — as was M.'s custom — so severe that our comrade, and all the rest of us, would not have a minute's time in which to dream of heart-aches or any other. Ah! what an educator of troops he was, and what officers and men he succeeded in getting! And adored with all that — you will see to what a point by the anecdote I promised to tell you, which I am coming to now. A week had passed since we had exchanged these observations, and during that time there had been nothing but marching and countermarching, orders and counter-orders, rising at four o'clock, going to bed at ten, and the whole day in the saddle. We had all worked well, P. with the others, more than the others, even, for the great chief had, so to speak, never left him. Nor had I myself ever lost sight of him, though I had avoided

all occasion of a second time putting his bad humour and my patience to the test; and I had come to the conclusion that the remedy our general had proposed was taking effect. P., now and then, would laugh and talk. His mouth grew more cheerful, his eyes more rational. And so I was very far from expecting the attack of half-madness which came suddenly to horrify us all, and whose memory affects me even now when I think of it. I knew afterward that he had received, the preceding evening, — from one of those unwise friends who believe they are doing us a service by making known to us as fact the thing of which the mere idea drives us to madness, — a fearful letter about the conduct of his mistress during his absence. I had noticed, in saying good morning to him that day, that again his face was clouded as on the day of his arrival. Then I had not thought of it again, being absorbed in the interest of the military action in which we were about to take part. At this moment I see that scene as if I were there. It was a morning which promised a beautiful, warm day. No later than eight o'clock, and the sun was already hot. We were a little group of officers awaiting, on a low hillock in the shadow of a few trees, the return of General M., who had left us, to go without escort, for a final glance at the lines. Knowing that we should have to wait some time, we had dismounted, and our men were holding our horses. Suddenly an officer says to P.: —

"'Look at that fool there; see how he is pulling that horse about; you'll be lucky if he doesn't spoil his mouth.'

"It was a fact that, at the moment, the hussar who had charge of the horse was martyrizing the poor animal, jerking his bit, to make him stand still. P. turns. He sees what is going on. An expression of rage, such as I have never seen on the face of any one else, distorted his features grown suddenly grayish, and before any one of us could even think of stopping him, he had sprung forward with lifted whip. The soldier, who had not seen him coming, received the first stroke upon the shoulder. He jumps back. The second knocks off his *kepi*. For a moment we thought he was about to spring upon the aggressor; he, too, had grown so pale, and what a look! He had dropped the bridle of the horse, and his two fists were clenched. Fortunately, he controlled himself. We saw something — *that was not fear* — get the better of his anger; he went and picked up his cap and unfastened his own horse; and P., restored to himself, disentangled the reins of his animal and got into the saddle, while no one of the witnesses of this scene broke a silence which became tragic when we heard General M.'s voice speaking to us. He had galloped back to us without our being able to see him coming, on account of the clump of trees, which also hid from him P.'s incredible outrage. This we perceived from the gay tone in which he called out to us:—

"'Well, gentlemen, all in saddle and quickly! We have things by the right end to-day!' Then, when he had come close up to us, he stopped speaking. He perceived by our appearance that something extraordinary had happened in his absence, and he asked:—

"'Well! What's going on?'

"'Nothing, general,' I replied, as if he had spoken to me alone. 'Nothing at all.' And the same instinct that had led me to offer this denial prevented any one of my comrades from raising his voice to contradict me. I well remember that as I spoke, I did not dare to look toward the soldier who had been struck. But neither did he protest. And the general himself said simply, 'Ah!' which proved to me that he was not at all deceived by my reply. But time was slipping by, and first of all, the day's work surely! He made no further inquiry, and a few minutes later we were galloping, boot by boot, toward the point determined on by our chief, the occupation of which would secure to us 'the right end.'

"Only I who knew him was sure that the day would not end without his getting to the bottom of the morning's incident. How would it be possible to conceal this incident when it had had over twenty witnesses, and among them several common soldiers? Moreover, he who had been the victim would make a complaint, and he would have the right to do it. What would happen to the offender? And, to us all, what a trying

thing! What a humiliation! It would be hard for me to tell you what I felt all that day. I never in my life more thoroughly understood what is meant by the old expression, *brothers-in-arms*. I did not look at P. once during those twelve hours. I did not address a word to him. It was as if, dishonouring his uniform by an action unworthy of an officer, he had dishonoured mine and that of all our comrades. But let us go on.

"What I had foreseen came to pass very exactly. About half-past seven in the evening, after we were in our lodgings in the little city where we were to spend the night, the general sent for me.

"'Fortunately,' said the young lieutenant by whom he had sent the message, and who had been one of the witnesses of the morning's scene, 'the general knows nothing about P.'s affair. I hear that the soldier makes no complaint.'

"'How did you hear?' I asked.

"'From one of our men. They have taken an oath, the eight soldiers who were with us, himself included, to remain silent. "The chief is so fond of him," they said to me, speaking of P., "he loves him like a son; and the general is so good to us. We will not cause him this grief."'

"'But it's impossible!' I exclaimed.

"'I don't know whether it's impossible,' the lieutenant said, 'but it's true. What soldiers Frenchmen are!'

"'When they have such a general as M.,' I replied. 'And do you know whether P. has any idea of this?'

"'He has not opened his lips all day. But if you would like to see him, here we are, just in front of his house.'

"'Unless he apologizes to this soldier, I shall never want to see him again while I live,' was my reply.

"'He? Apologize?' said the lieutenant. 'He would be more likely to repeat the offence. I looked at him well this morning, and all day to-day. He is a wild beast when he is angry, and he would be cut to pieces sooner than come round; do you want to know what the end will be of this? There'll be a duel with one of us. The others all think as you do. He'll be quarantined, and then! However, the manœuvres are just ending, and perhaps nothing may happen. At any rate, the worst is avoided.'

"He had spoken very sensibly, as you see; and when he had finished speaking to me in this way, I remember perfectly that I agreed with him, and I said, 'Yes, that is true; the worst is avoided.' Then, when I found myself in the presence of the general, I will not undertake to explain to you what took place in me. But I felt, just as soon as I met his grave and loyal glance, that I *physically could not* lie to him if he questioned me. I have often reflected upon the motive which swayed me in that conversation, and I have always felt that I, being the man I was, yielded

to exactly the same veneration for the admirable chief that had determined the silence of the insulted soldier. A general like him had the right to know everything that went on among his men. His army corps and himself were one. His soldiers were his family, they were himself; and I should have despised myself had I deceived him on an occasion so poignant. Accordingly when, alone with me, he put me the question that I had dreaded all through that interminable day, I had not the strength to repeat my falsehood: —

"'What had happened when I came back to you this morning at eight?' he asked me. And as I remained silent: 'Tell me,' he continued, 'was it something which concerned P.? Am I right? Yes? What had he done?' And as if he had read my thoughts: 'It is a part of the military duty not to tell a falsehood to the general. Do you not know this, Henri?'

"The use of my name, giving a note of tenderness to this imperative inquiry, decided me. I only begged the general to promise me he would not punish the offender.

"'If it is possible, I promise you,' he said. And this promise being given, which took away from my act all evil aspect as that of an informer, I told him all. As I spoke, I saw his old lion's face — if you have ever seen him you will remember it — grow dark until it became formidable. However, he let me go on without a word. Then, after a few minutes, which seemed interminable, while he paced the room; —

"'My dear Henri,' he said, 'I thank you for having told me the truth. I thank you for the army and for myself.' There was a remarkable solemnity in his tone as he said these words. 'I thank you, also, for P.;' and he added: 'Bring that man here whom he struck, and all the other soldiers who were there at the time. Find them for me immediately, and bring them here.'

"Half an hour later I arrived, and with me the eight soldiers who were with us on the little hillock in the morning. When we had entered the general's room, he asked me:—

"'Which is the man of whom you were speaking?'

"I pointed to the soldier. 'My friend,' the general said, 'it is you, is it, who were struck by Commandant P.?'

"'No, general,' the man replied; 'I was not struck by Commandant P.'

"'You were struck by the commandant,' said the general, with an authority that admitted of no reply. 'I know it, and I also know why you have made no complaint. You have done right in this, for if the commandant for a moment forgot himself, it is because he has never entirely recovered from 1870. He was a hero in that war, and for that cause you must forgive him. He has been a good soldier, as you are, as we all are here. But my service consists chiefly in being responsible for my officers and my men. When one

of them does wrong, the fault is mine. N.,' he continued, calling the man by name, 'I apologize to you for the conduct of the commandant; and I desired your comrades to be present so that they might know that the general commanding the army corps apologized to you. Now give me your hand.'"

"And the Commandant P.?" one of us asked, as the narrator, as if choked with emotion, after so many years, at the memory of this scene, ceased speaking.

"The next day he sent in a request to exchange for Senegal," was the reply. "We were making an expedition at the time into that country; and he was the admirable officer there that he had been all his life — except for a moment, one single moment. And he fully expiated that one moment, for he died in Senegal, of yellow fever, in the course of the campaign. Although his death was very sad, I never think of it without saying to myself, having seen the harm an unworthy passion had done him, that General M. was right, and that he did save him. Ah! there was a chief! and you know, in war as well as in politics, everything depends upon that."

PARIS, October, 1901.